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ABSTRACT

In 1995, the North Carolina General Assembly directed the North Carolina State Board of Education to develop a plan to bolster student growth and performance in grades 4-8 throughout the state. In response, the board developed the ABCs of Public Education. (ABC stands for Accountability; teaching the Basics of reading, writing, and mathematics; and increasing Control of schools at the local level.) This book reports on policy implementation and successful change, and gives a firsthand account of systemic reform and capacity building in 15 public schools in North Carolina. It recounts how the ABCs were successfully initiated, adapted, and implemented, and why and how the ABCs legislation originated. It details how "assistance teams" were trained; how the teams were assigned to 15 low-performing schools; the teams' deployment process, entry and exit procedures, challenges and accomplishments, and results; and the lessons teams learned. Finally, the book describes the process by which change and progress within the targeted schools occurred through a policy initiative (Senate Bill 1139). The book includes 2 tables, a glossary, 20 references, and 2 appendices: (1) a list of assistance team reviewers and leaders and (2) Senate Bill 1139, "School-Based Management and Accountability Program." (WFA)

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ABCs of Public Education in North Carolina:

A Journey Toward Excellence

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*I believe the
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*It is time
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ABCs of Public Education
in North Carolina:

A Journey Toward Excellence





I believe the time has come to take what we know and make a renewed commitment to the American Dream. It is time for compulsory schooling to be transformed into compulsory learning. We now know what it takes.

(Lezotte, 1997, p. 67)

Armed with knowledge of the change process, and a commitment to action, we should accept nothing less than positive results on a massive scale at both the individual and organizational levels (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 98).

Accomplishments

The State Board of Education and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction express much appreciation to the leaders and reviewers of the Assistance Teams who wrote different chapters of the *ABCs of Public Education in North Carolina: A Journey Toward Excellence*. Even though the chapters were written by different team members, one common theme undergirds the document: All children can learn. The expertise of the teams, their experiences in the 15 low-performing schools, and both their personal and professional commitment to educational reform provide the content for this document. We are indebted to the Assistance Teams for taking the initiative and time to describe the innovative process by which change occurred in these schools during the 1997-98 school year.



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Second, we are grateful to other Assistance Team leaders and reviewers (Appendix A) without whom the writing of this document would not have been possible. The annual reports and other documents submitted to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Division of School Improvement were used to contextualize this document. Information provided by other team leaders and reviewers was invaluable.

Third, a special thank-you is appropriate for three team reviewers, Sandra Jo Dover, Marilyn McCarthy, and Geraldine Webb-Harris, for collecting and organizing terms for the glossary (Chapter Nine).

Finally, a special thanks to Dr. Elsie Leak of School Improvement at the Division of Public Instruction for providing additional information for Chapters Two and Six and especially for her initiation and development of this project. Her support and dedication are recognized and valued.

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North Carolina's public schools will create a system that will be customer-driven with local flexibility to achieve mastery of core skills with high levels of accountability in areas of student achievement (North Carolina State Board of Education Mission Statement, April 1996).

Introduction

Although the public schools in North Carolina were progressing, members of the North Carolina General Assembly felt that the changes were not fast enough to meet the demands of businesses and of higher education. Far too many students were graduating from North Carolina's public schools without the basic skills and essential knowledge necessary to become successful workers and productive citizens in a global market. The State Board of Education believed that local schools must know what level of student performance the state expected. Consequently, in 1995, the General Assembly directed the North Carolina State Board of Education to develop a plan to bolster student growth and performance in grades 4-8 throughout the state.

The State Board of Education developed the ABCs of Public Education in response to the School-Based Management and Accountability Program, Senate Bill 1139 (Appendix B), enacted June 1996 by the General Assembly. The acronym *ABC* stands for **A**ccountability; teaching the **B**asics of reading, writing, and mathematics; and increasing **C**ontrol of schools at the local level. The ABCs of Public Education was implemented in grades K-8 during the 1996-97 school year. For the 1997-98 school year, the North Carolina State Board of Education, for the first time, assigned the Assistance Teams to K-8 schools that had been "designated" by the Board as low performing at the end of the 1996-97 school year. These 15 schools had not met expected growth, and over 50% of the students in these schools were performing below grade level. Furthermore, the educational performance of students was declining within these identified schools.

Information within this document should be of interest to policymakers and practitioners engaged in comprehensive educational reform. Implicit in this document are three important messages for making a difference in the lives of children. First, although change is complex and challenging, successful change is possible in low-performing schools. Second, continuous support from the North Carolina General Assembly, Department of Public Instruction, and other policymaking groups is critical for starting, implementing, and sustaining successful educational reform initiatives. Third, the success of any innovation depends on those closest to children becoming empowered allies in the change process.

This document describes the journey whereby the ABCs of Public Education, as a comprehensive reform initiative for improving student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics, was successfully initiated, adapted, and implemented. As an example of integrating policy into practice, this document describes why and how the ABCs legislation originated, how the Assistance Teams were trained, and how the Teams were assigned to 15 low-performing North Carolina schools. The document describes the deployment process, outlines the Teams' entry and exit procedures, describes the challenges and positive accomplishments, explains results, and presents lessons learned. Finally, the document describes the innovative process by which change and progress within the targeted schools occurred through this policy initiative. Ultimately, this document is a story of policy implementation, successful change, and a firsthand description of systemic reform and capacity building in 15 public schools in North Carolina.

Chapter One

HISTORY OF THE ABCs LEGISLATION

During the last two decades, North Carolina's public schools experienced a continuing series of legislative and policy initiatives directed toward reforming public school education. These reform efforts helped North Carolina make progress; however, the reforms were not adequate to prepare students for the 21st century. With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), the public became cognizant of the need for changes, such as increased academic standards and expectations, greater emphasis on basic skills, increased accountability through testing, increased time for learning, and increased teacher accountability.

Community and business leaders recognized that too many high school students were graduating from public school without the skills and knowledge necessary to become successful workers and productive citizens. According to Jay Robinson, Chairman of the North Carolina State Board of Education, if parents, employers and businesses do not have confidence in our schools, then North Carolina cannot become a place "where the weak grow strong, and the strong grow great." Good schools represent the last, best opportunity for that promise to become reality for each North Carolinian (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1995).

The North Carolina General Assembly recognized the need for a new phase of educational reform. This reform needed to include authority for teachers and principals to make significant and sweeping changes. In addition, teachers and principals needed to be held accountable for student achievement at the school level. The new ABCs legislation was a result of that realization. In 1995, the State Board of Education was charged with drafting a plan to improve public schools in North Carolina. School improvement efforts of the past had focused on resources or input; however,

according to Richard Thompson, State Deputy Superintendent, "For the first time, the idea of school improvement driven by accountability was happening in North Carolina" (personal communication, June 1998).

The General Assembly instructed the State Board of Education to develop a way to restructure public education to (a) uphold high educational standards, (b) provide maximum local flexibility, (c) focus instruction on the basics, and (d) include a strong accountability program. In the development of the ABCs of Public Education, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) examined school reform initiatives that were underway in other states. An advisory committee was established to develop a school reform model for the state of North Carolina. A kindergarten through eighth-grade Assistance Team model was developed and then piloted in 10 school systems during the 1995-96 school year. According to Dr. Henry Johnson, Associate Superintendent for Instructional and Accountability Services, "Research on school improvement has determined that reform must be comprehensive, intensive, and sustained. The most effective way to ensure that happened in the low-performing schools was to assign Assistance Teams" (personal communication, June 1998). The new legislation mandated that Team members remain at their assigned schools for a minimum of 1 year. In 1996, the North Carolina General Assembly approved the State Board's plan and passed a law known as the School-Based Management and Accountability Program or the ABCs of Public Education. Ratified Senate Bill 1139, Chapter 716, mandated key provisions related to the ABCs and included other provisions related to character education, reading instruction, and safe schools (Appendix B). The ABCs of Public Education was implemented for the first time during the 1996-97 school year. A high school model is being implemented during the 1998-1999 school year.

High standards are at the center of the ABCs. The aim is to ensure that all students are learning and showing continuous improvement. All stakeholders, such as school boards, superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, parents, and the community as a whole, are to ensure that every child reaches his or her potential. The North Carolina General Assembly also holds the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the State Board of Education accountable for the success of the ABCs of Public Education. The plan looks at the progress of individual schools, rather than at whole school systems. Student progress is monitored from the beginning of the school year to the end and from one grade to the next. The plan compares the school with itself and measures the progress of its own students by comparing pretest and posttest scores on the North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests (EOG) in reading, writing, and math. Jay Robinson stated that "Each school will be responsible for making sure your child gets at least a year's worth of growth for a year's worth of school" (North Carolina School Improvement Panel, 1996).

A is for Accountability. Incentives and recognition go hand-in-hand with accountability. The North Carolina General Assembly provided funding for School Incentive Awards. Schools that achieve both exemplary status and expected growth standards have the opportunity to receive incentive awards. Teachers, principals, assistant principals, instructional support personnel, and teacher assistants assigned to a school with exemplary or expected growth are all eligible to receive incentive awards. In addition, recognition is given to schools that make significant progress or have consistently large percentages of their students scoring at or above grade level on end-of-grade tests.

B is for Basics. Schools are to focus on reading, writing, and mathematics. Students who have a firm grasp of the basics are guaranteed a better understanding of the other subjects that entail a well-rounded education. Even though other subjects, such as science history, geography, and the arts, are not tested under the ABCs, the content of these areas is critical to student learning and achievement. Schools are now given more freedom to integrate these subjects with the basics. All schools are required to teach the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*, a framework of goals and objectives that outlines the content to be covered for each subject at each grade level.

C is for Control. Principals and teachers are given more control over the schools in which they work and the flexibility to make their own decisions. While the state sets standards, it does not impose specific methods for improving student achievement and learning at the local level. Principals, teachers, and parents are given more flexibility to decide how to meet their goals. Individual schools can decide where to channel their efforts and their resources to achieve success. Governor James B. Hunt stated:

To build better schools and a better future for children, it's going to take a commitment from all us—principals, teachers and parents, as well as government, business and community leaders. Together, we must focus on raising standards, getting back to basics and giving local schools more flexibility so our public schools can prepare North Carolina's graduates to compete and succeed in the modern economy. If we do these things, there's no limit to what our public schools and our students can achieve (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1995).

ASSISTANCE TEAMS

Assistance Teams were assigned for the first time in 1997-98 school year. They were placed in K-8 schools "designated" by the North Carolina State Board of Education as low performing (i.e., schools that did not meet expected growth, in which over 50% of the students were performing below grade level, and in which the educational performance of students was declining). The Assistance Team members were chosen from highly skilled, motivated practicing teachers and staff, representatives of higher education, school administrators, retired educators, and others that the North Carolina State Board of Education considered appropriate. Sixty educators were chosen from a field of 600 applicants through a rigorous interview process. These educators were loaned to the State Board of Education from their local agencies for a period of 1 to 3 years to serve as members of Assistance Teams.

The task of Assistance Teams is to help low-performing schools evaluate their teaching and learning environment and provide services that will improve the education of all children in the school. The law requires Assistance Teams to:

1. Conduct needs assessments and develop recommendations for improving student performance;
2. Evaluate certified staff at least semiannually and make recommendations concerning their performance;
3. Collaborate with school personnel, central office personnel, and local boards of education to design, implement, and monitor a plan to improve student performance;
4. Continue to monitor and make recommendations to the plan and periodically review the school's progress; and
5. Make periodic reports to the local board of education, the community, and the State Board of Education regarding the school's progress.

Although changes and improvements in public education have taken place over the years, the new ABCs of Public Education has shown during the first year of implementation that it can improve student achievement. The plan mirrors the complexity of what is required to transform a school's environment to one that promotes high student achievement and that advocates improved teacher performance. The challenge is to continue revising the plan, as needed, to meet future needs and to continue supporting schools in the maintenance of high academic achievement for all students.

School improvement is an endeavor that requires engagement of the head and the heart (Dr. Elsie Leak, personal communication, 1997).

Chapter Two

TRAINING THE ASSISTANCE TEAMS

BACKGROUND

On April 15, 1997, educators from around the state of North Carolina convened at the Raleigh Plaza Hotel for the first meeting of the newly formed State Assistance Teams. Team members were addressed by Dr. Richard Thompson, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Henry Johnson, Associate Superintendent of Instructional and Accountability; Dr. Elsie C. Leak, Director of School Improvement; and Dr. Dudley Flood, retired school administrator. Together they shared their vision and direction for the year's work.

Clearly, these teams of educators were some of the best and the brightest North Carolina had to offer. The Team members were not only well qualified in all areas of curriculum, instruction, or administration, but they shared a common vision and commitment to do whatever was necessary to help the low-performing schools raise their student achievement levels.

LOGISTICS AND SCHEDULING

Training occurred in two phases. The first phase took place during the weeks of April 14-18, May 5-9, June 16-20, and June 23-27, 1997. Research and Evaluation Associates, Inc., a research firm from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, conducted the training. While some Assistance Team members were released from their duties in March, others had to wait until the end of the school year to join their teammates. By staggering the Phase I training, Team members could train together and still maintain their respective responsibilities in their home systems.

Phase II training began June 30 and continued through August 7. Various presenters and staff from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction continued to prepare Team members for their roles and responsibilities as members of State Assistance Teams.

Daily sessions ran from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM with breaks scheduled in the morning, at lunch, and in the afternoon. Assistance Team members received renewal credit based on the number of hours they attended training.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

On November 4, 1996, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction sent out a Request for Proposals to find "an appropriate and qualified vendor" to train teams of educators assigned to assist designated low-performing schools. The Request for Proposal stated:

They [Assistance Team members] will need common and extensive preparation in all facets of school improvement to conduct a comprehensive review and provide related services to low performing schools. This comprehensive review must address scheduling, school climate, staff development, and the school improvement process... While large group activities are appropriate, participants tend to benefit more when involved actively, cooperat[ing] in small group activities, participat[ing] in simulations, and allow[ed] time for reflection. (Request for Proposals: Training For State Assistance Teams, November 1996)

The Request for Proposals also stated that the selected vendor must include, as a minimum, the following "broad categories and training components":

1. Effective schools orientation (characteristics or correlates of effective schools) team-building (problem-solving, interpersonal, intrapersonal, decision-making, and team maintenance skills);
2. School improvement planning process (systemic change diagnosis/interpretation of student outcomes and organization dimensions, development of objective data-driven diagnostic reports, problem identification through effective questions, improvement objectives and action plans);
3. Descriptive strategies (research and best practices, assessment, curriculum alignment, instructional delivery, and environmental factors);
4. Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (coaching, staff evaluation, and institutionalization); and
5. Effective presentation of reports to various audiences (i.e., State Board of Education, local boards, school staff, and parents).

PHASE I TRAINING

Trainers

In February, 1997, Research and Evaluation Associates, Inc., was notified that they would be training the teachers and administrators comprising the 12 Assistance Teams. Research and Evaluation Associates, a full-service applied research firm with offices in Washington, DC, and headquartered in Chapel Hill, NC, was founded in 1979 by the president, Peggy A. Richmond, Ph.D., to provide educational and social science research services to entities involved with governance at federal, state, and local levels. The firm has a staff of 45-50 highly skilled individuals, with backgrounds in education, social sciences, health sciences, law, business, and the humanities, plus a cadre of on-call personnel.

The following sections present the topics in which the Assistance Teams received training. The names of the various trainers and presenters for each session follow the explanation of each topic.

WEEK 1

ABCs of Public Education

The first two days of training began with Dr. Peggy Richmond reviewing the general status of public education in North Carolina. She explored the basic tenets of NC Senate Bill 1139 and the core components of the ABCs of Public Education and explained the purpose, goals, and themes for the 4-week training sessions.

Ray V. Spain presented a general overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Assistance Teams. Participants learned about the requirements of the Legislative Act 115C-1105.13 (Appendix B), became familiar with information gathering methods for the schools' needs assessment and review process, and learned their role in evaluating school personnel. Team members examined the key components of local school districts' participation in the ABCs of Public Education and reviewed budget flexibility, use of waivers, school improvement plans, staff development requirements, and local school districts' flexibility within state laws, policies, rules, and regulations.

All facets of school-based accountability were discussed and explored, including the requirements for annual performance goals, how to calculate growth using the ABCs Tools Software, procedures for identifying low-performing schools, dismissal and removal of personnel at low-performing schools, and the suspension of powers and duties of local boards of education.

Dudley Flood, a former school administrator and motivational speaker, concluded the day with a presentation on improving low-performing schools. He explained to the Teams the importance of taking the time to become familiar with the assigned school's culture and needs and to build on the strengths in the school.

[Trainers: Peggy A. Richmond, President, Research and Evaluation Associates, Inc.; Ray V. Spain, Associate Superintendent, Lenoir County Public Schools; Presenter Dudley Flood, Retired School Administrator]

School Improvement Plans

The third day of training focused on the key elements of the local school planning process. The Teams examined conditions that must be present for meaningful change to occur in school-based decision-making, and they discussed problem-solving processes.

[Trainers: Wayne Trogdon, Consultant, Welkins Group; Alton Cheek, Principal Guy B. Phillips Middle School]

Needs Assessment

Discussions on the fourth day pertained to the basic components of conducting a needs assessment and how to apply them in a school setting. The session began with an overview of needs assessment. Afterward, the participants met in small groups to discuss the role of needs assessment in assisting schools, how to identify areas that needed to be assessed, and how to initiate a needs assessment. During concurrent training sessions, Team members learned about different types of individual and group interviews and the guidelines for developing and conducting individual interviews and focus groups. The participants divided into pairs to role-play and discuss individual interviews. After the participants had summarized the findings from all the groups, they determined the most effective needs assessment procedures for different circumstances.

[Trainers: Tanya Suarez, Associate Professor, Fayetteville State University; Peggy A. Richmond, President, Research and Evaluation Associates, Inc.]

Effective Schools

On Friday, participants listened to Dr. Asa Hilliard III's presentation on the importance of maintaining high expectations of students and accepting no excuses when working with students. Dr. Hilliard also emphasized the importance of conveying high expectations to staff members and parents.

[Presenter: Asa Hilliard III, Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education, Georgia State University]

WEEK 2

Continuous Assessment

Participants received an overview of the North Carolina End-of-Grade testing program. Participants learned about the structure of end-of-grade tests in reading and mathematics and about reports included in the data analyst software. Some of these reports analyze disaggregated school and district achievement information using two different matrices and also analyze the degree to which specific instructional objectives are taught and learned at the classroom level.

[Trainer: David Holdzkorn, Executive Director for Research, Development, and Accountability, Durham Public Schools]

Team Building

Groups of participants developed a code of conduct and a mission statement, after which each group shared its information with the other Teams. Dr. Leak addressed issues, questions, and concerns from the Team members. Each group's mission statement and code of conduct was compiled to develop a single mission statement and code of conduct for all the Teams.

[Leader: Elsie Leak, Director, Division of School Improvement]

School Leadership Panel

This training session focused on the characteristics, behaviors, and responsibilities of effective school leaders; the role the Assistance Team would play in supporting and fostering school leadership; and how to identify school cultures that support effective schools. Each panelist made a 20- to 30-minute presentation.

[Panelists: Larry Fields, Principal, Rowland Hill Latham Elementary School; Frances Reaves, Principal, West Middle School; Bob Bridges, Educational Consultant]

Effective Curricular Offerings: Strategies for Teaching Reading, Mathematics, Classroom Management, and Instructional Delivery

Team members explored curriculum development. In the session focusing on reading instruction, participants examined a variety of research-based techniques and student developmental practices documented to improve student performance in reading. Participants learned that by incorporating different reading strategies into reading instruction, students' comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation skills of different types of text can be improved. Also, during the reading session, participants worked in teams to design a simple, integrated unit based on higher levels of thinking and the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*.

In the math session, Team members worked in pairs to solve problems using math manipulatives. This hands-on approach to teaching math allowed Team members to explore a variety of strategies that they would later share with teachers at their designated schools.

The final two sessions dealt with strategies for understanding student diversity and building a positive classroom environment. In both sessions, Team members participated in activities that encouraged a deeper understanding of the issues facing students today. Participants learned how to use effective group and individual strategies to communicate expectations for student behavior. Additionally, the Team members learned classroom management strategies for developing a positive physical, sociological, and emotional classroom climate.

[Trainers: Valerie Knight, Assistant Principal, Aurelian Springs Elementary School; Luther Johnson, Mathematics Teacher, Glenn High School; Francesina Jackson, Associate Professor of Professional Studies, North Carolina Central University; Wynton Hadley, Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Fayetteville State University]

WEEK 3

Team-School Relations

Teams observed trainers as they modeled behaviors the Team members would need when they interacted with the school personnel. Using a sample case study of a low-performing school and the knowledge they had gained from their training, Team members worked together to complete a variety of tasks associated with the case study. Teams role-played how they would conduct their first meeting with the school improvement team from that school.

[Trainers: School Improvement Division Staff]

Home-School Relations

Participants learned about various levels of parental involvement. The trainer presented common barriers within schools that prevent parents and families from becoming involved and discussed effective methods for improving home-school relations.

[Trainer: Claire White, Consultant]

Student Supports

Team members explored the purpose and goals of student support systems and how effective schools use their student support systems. They reviewed the roles of the school counselor, school psychologist, and the school social worker; identified methods in which these traditional programs address student concerns; and brainstormed ways in which student supports could assist in improving student performance.

[Consultant: Janice Williams, Mediation, Inc.]

Staff Development

Teams focused on ways they could facilitate staff development in their designated schools. Team members discussed the goals of staff development and developed strategies for planning and implementing effective staff development activities.

[Trainer: James P. "Pat" Harrel, Retired Superintendent, Education Consultant]

Personnel Evaluations

This session was designed to prepare observers/evaluators to administer the North Carolina Performance Evaluation System. Participants reviewed the components of the Teacher Appraisal Instrument and studied various data collecting techniques. They also practiced collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data they had collected from observing videotapes of practicing classroom teachers.

[Trainer: Beth Hollars, Consultant]

WEEK 4

Reporting Progress

Participants focused on interpreting, using, and reporting student data to parents, school boards, and the media. Team members reviewed various types of data used in school planning and, then, using a sample school improvement plan (SIP), explored various scenarios for reporting to parents. Participants identified a variety of strategies that could be used to report the SIP outcomes to the local boards of education. Participants also learned how to report information to the media and how to deal effectively with the media.

[Trainers: David Holdzkorn, Executive Director for Research, Development, and Accountability, Durham County Schools; Ray V. Spain, Associate Superintendent, Lenoir Public Schools; Bill F. Hensley, Consultant]

Building a High Performance Team

In this session, Team members were given a framework for identifying and expressing their hopes and expectations for working together to help each other and the Team become successful. Participants identified the extent to which they were a team versus a work group; explored the stages of team development; identified strategies for helping them move effectively through these stages; developed working norms with each other; and created a unique identity for each Team.

[Trainer: Anna Niemitz, Consultant]

Review and Reinforcement

On the final day of training, Assistance Teams met with Dr. Richmond to reflect on the 4 weeks of training. Dr. Richmond expressed her thanks and good wishes. Dr. Elsie Leak congratulated the Team members for completing the training and presented each Team member with a certificate of accomplishment.

[Trainer: Peggy A. Richmond, President, Research and Evaluation Associates, Inc.]



THE STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF THE ASSISTANCE TEAM TRAINING

The ability to adapt to the needs of the participants and the ABCs of Public Education was, according to Dr. Richmond, the director of Research and Evaluations Associates, Inc., one of the major strengths of the Assistance Team training. "Because the ABCs of Public Education was so new and there were so many unknowns, everything was in a constant state of flux. One of our greatest challenges in preparing for the training was adapting to the constantly changing needs of the ABCs of Public Education" (personal communication, February, 1997).

Dr. Richmond said that by the time the contract for training had been awarded in February, 1997, the needs identified in the original Request for Proposals had changed. This change in identified needs left Research and Evaluation Associates with just 6 weeks in which to revise their original plan, develop a new staff development sequence, develop training materials, and prepare themselves to train the Assistance Teams. Even after the training was underway, the ability to remain flexible was a constant hurdle to overcome.

Even though the needs of the ABCs of Public Education continued to change throughout the training, the purpose, "to ensure that they [Assistance Teams] receive common and extensive preparation in all facets of school improvement" (NC G.S. 115C-105.31, see Appendix B), remained the same. Team members learned that, while the cultural diversity, resources, and demographics at each school might be different, students in all these schools had the same needs. As Assistance Team members, they had to believe and be prepared to convince others that (a) all students can learn, (b) educators are accountable, (c) systematic changes must occur, and (d) schools can be transformed.

As a result of Phase I training, the Assistance Team members received 21 days, or 160 hours, of instruction on educational issues and topics from Research and Evaluation Associates, Inc.

PHASE II TRAINING

Trainers

In addition to the training provided in Phase I, Assistance Teams received 80 hours of training from July 4-August 7, 1997. Staff members from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of School Improvement, and other presenters provided this additional training.

Assistance Teams' training occurs in the spring and summer prior to the school year in which they serve their assigned schools. According to Dr. Richmond, final evaluations from the first year's training resulted in revisions for the 1998 training. One major change was reducing the training staff to a core of five trainers. Dr. Richmond felt that using a core team of trainers would make the training more sequential and better integrated. Only in instances where the trainers felt they lacked the knowledge or expertise were outside experts brought in to conduct a training session. For example, two of the Assistance Teams were assigned to Montessori schools in 1997-98. Because several Assistance Team members felt they needed a better understanding of the Montessori philosophy, a Montessori expert conducted a session on the history and philosophy of Montessori schools in the next year's training.

Dr. Richmond also recommended that, in the future, a contract be awarded in December, with training to begin in June. Awarding the training contract earlier will allow more time to develop a training sequence and training support materials. As well, Team members will have the opportunity to finish the school year before assuming their responsibilities on an Assistance Team.

WEEK 1

Resource Finding

In this activity, Assistance Teams visited the various staff members from the Department of Public Instruction who could be a resource to them as they addressed the needs of the schools to which they were later assigned. Team members also explored the many instructional support materials and equipment available to them in the Agency.

[Trainers: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of School Improvement, staff members]

Legislative Updates

This presentation focused on issues and decisions that the North Carolina General Assembly was deliberating. Background information on legislative issues dealing with North Carolina public schools equipped Team members to respond to questions that school personnel in the low-performing schools might ask.

[Trainer: Ann Berlam, Legislative Director for the State Board of Education]

Information Access System (LAS), Computer Skills Curriculum and Resources, Media and Technology Resources, and Technology Resources for the School.

Team members learned about the technological resources available at the Department of Public Instruction to support their efforts in the field, and they received practical, hands-on experience in using technology resources. They also received written materials for future reference.

[Presenters & Trainers: Margaret Bingham, Section Chief, Instructional Technology Planning and Integration; Frances Bradburn, Section Chief, Information Technology Evaluation Services; Martha Campbell, Consultant, Information/Computer Skills K-12; Archie Cowan, Section Chief, Applications Software Support; Linda DeGrand, Section Chief, Distance Learning Systems; Cornelia Kensak, Application Development Project Supervisor]

Examining the ABCs

Assistance Team members learned about their roles and responsibilities in a legal context. Special caution and guidance was given with regard to the teacher observation and evaluation process. The presenter addressed Team members' questions.

[Presenter: Laura Crumpler, Legal Staff, State Attorney General's Office]

Brain Research

Team members heard about the latest brain research information and how this research could support their efforts to improve student and teacher performance.

[Facilitators: Marilyn Palmer, Consultant, School Improvement Division; Brock Ridge, Assistance Team Member]

WEEK 2

Characteristics of Improving High Poverty Schools

Some common attributes shared by the schools assessed in this study were outlined and discussed. Team members received a preview of conditions that are necessary for a school with a large percentage of students at the poverty level to improve student achievement. This information helped Teams understand the changes that could occur in the low-performing schools as a result of the Teams' intervention.

[Carolyn Cobb, Section Chief, Evaluation]

Exceptional Children Issues

The Assistance Teams were charged with serving the needs of exceptional children and ensuring the children do well. This session provided Teams with a greater understanding of compliance issues and the significance of being inclusive in providing guidance and support to exceptional children's teachers as a part of the total improvement plan.

[Lowell Harris, Director, Exceptional Children's Division]

Field Manual Preparation

The task in this session was to develop a *Field Manual* for the Team members to take with them to their assigned schools. Gail Daves and Anne Brinkley were assigned to cochair the effort. The cochairs, working with other Team members' input, determined the manual's content and format. This manual served as a valuable and practical resource to each Team.

[Presenter: Elsie C. Leak, Director, School Improvement Division]

Accountability

In this session, Teams learned the details of the accountability system and some results of the first year of implementing the ABCs of Public Education. Presenters explained the methods of computing school performance and growth on the ABCs. Test data analysis was discussed because this information would be important to the Teams when they conducted needs assessments in their assigned schools.

[Presenters: Gary Williamson, Section Chief, Reporting; Helmut Fiefs, Consultant, Educational Planning and Development; Belinda Black, Consultant, Educational Research and Evaluation]

WEEK 3

Early Childhood Initiatives (Pre K-2)

Team members were updated on the early childhood initiatives in curriculum and assessment. Available written resource materials were reviewed and shared among the Teams.

[Presenters: Lucy Roberts, Section Chief, Early Childhood, and Section Members]

Writing Rubrics: Grades 4, 7, and 10

Team members examined the rubrics and were taught the scoring process. They studied writing samples that were scored as either 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4. By contrasting the differences in the quality of the writing samples, Team members could visualize differences among the various scores. Teams also received valuable handouts for future reference.

[Trainer: Daisy Vickers, Consultant, Educational Research and Evaluation]

Curricular Areas: Mathematics and English Language Arts

This session focused on a review of mathematics and English language arts from the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Instructional support documents for these curricular areas were also discussed.

[Presenters: Michael Kestner, Section Chief, Mathematics, and Mathematics Section Members; Michael Frye, Section Chief, English Language Arts, and Section Members]

WEEK 4

Distinguished Educators: Kentucky Department of Education

David Allen and his colleagues from Kentucky described the roles and responsibilities of "Distinguished Educators." These educators were responsible for assisting schools designated as low performing in the Kentucky School Accountability System. The concept of "distinguished educators" was compared to and contrasted with that of "Assistance Teams."

[Presenters: David Allen and colleagues, Kentucky Department of Education]

Team Member Evaluation, Protocols, and School Entry

This session correlated the various training sessions to shape the steps Team members would take as they began their assignments, marking the end of the preparation phase and moving the Teams closer to implementation.

[Presenter: Dr. Elsie C. Leak, Director, School Improvement Division]

Creating Safe Schools Conference

In this session, each Team was responsible for conducting a comprehensive needs assessment of its assigned school. One component of the needs assessment addressed a safe, orderly school environment. The sessions in this conference provided an array of strategies that could be used at the school site to promote and maintain a safe, orderly school environment.

[Sponsors: Dennis Stacey, Section Chief, Safe Schools/Instructional Support Section, and Section Members]

WEEK 5

Making Assessment Data Powerful

Team members learned the significance of assessment and how to utilize the data to strengthen an instructional program.

[Presenter: Jeanne Joyner, Consultant, Educational Research and Evaluation]

Mediation/Facilitation Training

Assistance Team members learn about serving as mediators if a dispute arises between the school and the local board of education regarding the school improvement plan. In this session, Team members are given the tools to mediate this type of dispute should it become necessary.

[Trainer: Michael Wendt, Durham County Dispute Settlement Center]

Mentor Training

Team members learn to serve as coaches and mentors to some of the certified staff. This training was important so that Team members could help build capacity in staff members in the low-performing schools. Team members gained knowledge and confidence in their ability to deliver this service to staff in their assigned schools.

[Trainer: Beth B. Hollars, Consultant]



There is little point in concluding that our schools are in trouble and then focusing for improvement only on teachers, or principals, or the curriculum. All of these and more are involved. Consequently, efforts at improvement must encompass the school as a system of interacting parts, each affecting the other (Goodlad, 1984, p. 31).

Chapter Three

DEPARTURE FROM DPI: ENTERING AND EXITING THE LOCAL SCHOOLS

THE DEPLOYMENT PROCESS

This chapter presents information regarding the deployment process: (a) decisions concerning where the Assistance Teams would be sent, and (b) the processes and variables involved in entering and exiting the 15 schools. The first section provides information on who made the strategic decisions as to which Teams would be assigned to which designated low-performing schools and how these decisions were made. The second and third sections present critically important variables for entering and exiting designated low-performing schools. The final section, a summary, discusses recommendations that may be useful to persons who are confronted with similar circumstances.



DECISIONS ON WHERE TO SEND THE ASSISTANCE TEAMS

Two officials from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Dr. Henry Johnson and Dr. Elsie Leak, were required, based on initial state test data, to anticipate where to assign the 15 Assistance Teams. Teams were assigned to schools based on the following variables: (a) distance to be traveled by Team members, (b) skills and experiences of individual Team members, (c) characteristics of the schools, (d) diversity of the Teams, (e) test history of the school, and (f) whether the school in question was elementary, middle, or both.

The data identifying the state's 15 low-performing schools were presented to the Assistance Teams during the first week of August 1997. However,

because the data were not finalized or voted on by the State Board of Education until the second week of August, the data revealed different information than had been anticipated by DPI staff, especially in terms of the actual location of the 15 schools designated as the lowest performing in the state. Once DPI officials had valid information on the 15 low-performing schools, DPI staff then had to reconfigure where the Assistance Teams would be sent. Several Teams were changed to match more closely the needs of the identified schools and to ensure greater diversity in each Team. Certain Team members were changed to other Teams where less travel per day was required to reach the job site.

ENTERING THE SCHOOL

The manner in which an Assistance Team is introduced into communication between Team members and the school faculty throughout the entire school year. The Team's ability to enter a school in a calm, nonthreatening manner helps create positive, smooth communication and builds strong working relationships. Local administrators who communicate their support for the Team during the initial meetings with faculties can have a very positive influence. Conversely, an adversarial approach by either the Team or local administrators during these first few weeks creates communication barriers that are difficult to overcome.

Recommended Entry Protocol

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's recommendation to the Teams for entry protocol was to hold separate meetings, as follows, prior to the beginning of the school year:

1. the Team representatives with the superintendent;
2. the Team chair with the principal;
3. all members of the Team with the principal;
4. the Team with all members of the school staff;
5. the Team with members of the school improvement team; and
6. the Team with the parent organization.

Additionally, the law required the school to hold a community meeting to inform the public of the school's low-performing status and to share the school's plan for improvement. Although Team members were not to conduct this meeting, they were expected to be present to answer questions.

What Happened Inside the Schools

In reality, the recommended entry process was modified to accommodate the varying circumstances in each school. The news of low-performing status came as a shock to many of those working in the

low-performing schools. Initial reactions were of disbelief and denial. In some school systems, students were already in classes when the news was announced on August 7, 1997; in others, staff members were assembled in planning meetings prior to the start of the school year.

Pursuant to the law, principals who had been at their schools for two years or longer were suspended. Seven of the fifteen principals fell into this category. These principals were instructed to leave their school buildings immediately to prepare for hearings before a three-member panel of the North Carolina State Board of Education. Two of the fifteen principals retired, One was transferred to another position in the county, and the remaining five principals had no action taken against them because they had been at their schools for less than two years.

Not all suspended principals followed the letter of the law. In one instance, the principal exchanged titles with the assistant principal and continued working at the school every day. One school system challenged the law, obtaining an injunction that allowed the principal to remain in place and that temporarily barred the Assistance Team from entering the school. The principal at this school was suspended on August 29, 1997, just prior to her hearing before the North Carolina State Board of Education. The hearing resulted in the principal's reinstatement. A new Assistance Team (formed from reorganizing existing Teams) entered the school approximately three weeks after the other Teams had begun working in their respective schools.

In other systems, interim principals were named while the school community waited for the State Board of Education's decisions. In one community, a retired principal was pressed into service and the existing school leader moved to another assignment within the system. Of the seven principals who had been suspended, six were reinstated and served at their schools for the 1997-98 school year.

Announcements of Assistance Teams and Initial Meetings

The manner in which faculties were informed of their school's status prior to the Assistance Teams' entry in the schools varied greatly. In one instance, a faculty learned the news from a public announcement an assistant superintendent made during a countywide staff meeting. In other cases, faculty members read about their school's status in the newspaper. Although the Teams had nothing to do with these initial communications, such insensitivity created animosity and hurt feelings that did not heal for many months.

The Teams' initial meetings with the different school communities occurred in various ways. In some smaller systems, the superintendent met the Team's representative in his or her office and accompanied the representative to the school to meet the principal. These meetings were mainly to get acquainted. Other Teams in larger systems found that the superintendent wanted the Team to meet formally with the central office staff to present specific plans on the first day. Some Teams never got to meet with the superintendent during the entire school year; rather, the Teams had close contact with superintendent's designee. Some Teams met local administrators first, then the Teams met with the faculty. At least one Team arrived during the new principal's first faculty meeting, whereupon the principal told the Team to introduce themselves and leave the meeting. Some superintendents met with the Team and the faculty during the Team's first meeting at the low-performing school. The superintendent's presence during initial meetings was helpful, because his or her presence sent a clear message to the faculty that the superintendent supported the Teams and expected the faculty to work with the Teams.

In retrospect, all Teams met the state's expectations regarding recommended entry protocol. The process was varied to accommodate different situations. Regardless of the circumstances, initial entry protocol

was critical to building and maintaining a positive relationship between the Team and the school system's leadership. Superintendents who provided Teams with visible support definitely helped build a partnership between the Teams and the school staff that made school improvement a reality.

Media

The ABCs of Public Education made interesting news in North Carolina during August 1997. Team leaders and principals at low-performing schools responded to many requests from news media for interviews. As designated spokesmen, Team leaders were trained to respond to media questions. Some Team leaders were interviewed in their assigned schools, and these conversations were later aired on major North Carolina television broadcasts. In other cases, superintendents arranged for formal press conferences where Team leaders responded to media questions.

Media coverage varied in different parts of the state during August and September of 1997. Although some news stories were positive toward the Teams, others were skeptical at best. In almost all counties, press coverage continued throughout the year. By May and June of 1998, the majority of news relating to the ABCs was overwhelmingly positive. One television broadcaster referred to an Assistance Team as the school's "Dream Team."

Faculty Interviews

To establish rapport and to begin gathering data for their needs assessment reports, many Teams conducted structured interviews with faculty and staff. Some Teams set up these interviews with almost every staff member in the school, including teachers, teacher assistants, custodians, parents, cafeteria staff, clerical staff, and bus drivers. The Teams also interviewed students whenever possible. Prior to conducting the interviews, Team members assured participants that any information used to develop the needs assessment reports would preserve the participants' confidentiality. The interviewers asked

questions like "What is going well?" and "How do you think things can be improved?"

Information from these interviews was helpful in compiling the needs assessment reports. In many cases, however, initial impressions did not reflect the school's true situation. Getting to the truth of the matter was often like peeling the layers of an onion, because it took many long months before some faculty members trusted Teams enough to respond honestly to questions. Therefore, the Teams had to deliberate at length before making recommendations for improvement to ensure the accuracy of the information they received and provided.

Improving Communication

As the interviews were completed, some Teams found it helpful to provide feedback to the faculty through weekly newsletters. For example, in one publication, a column about the interviews stated that "Many people expressed their opinion that discipline needs to be enforced more consistently and that parents need to be more involved."

Continuing to share information through weekly newsletters throughout the year provided regular opportunities for communication. For example, because faculty members were curious about what the Team, the principal, and the superintendent discussed in their weekly meetings, reports from such meetings were included in the newsletters. To achieve success, the Teams needed to keep the faculty and staff members involved in all facets of the school improvement process.

Principals

The principal's attitude was essential to the Team's ability to establish good communication. Generally, a team with a newly assigned principal had an easier time relating to the faculty and staff, although some principals who had been removed from their schools supported the Teams' efforts. The principal's cooperation signaled the staff that the principal supported the Team.

Central Office Staff

Some Teams invited all central office staff members who worked at the school to meet with them at the beginning of the school year. Establishing early communication and encouraging the central office staff to collaborate with the Team helped lay the foundation for continued school improvement not only in the 1997-98 school year but in future years. In some cases, central office staffs were more involved and supportive than were central office staff at other schools.

Parents

The ABCs legislation required a community meeting at which the principal would disclose the school plan for improving the school's status. This meeting was the first time many Teams were introduced to the community. Some principals just acknowledged the Teams, while others called upon Team members to make comments. Some Teams shared brochures developed by the State Board that emphasized the importance of parental representation on the school improvement team.

Assistance Team members also conducted parent surveys, published newsletters, held meetings, and invited parents to make individual appointments whenever they had specific questions. Fostering parental involvement was one of the most difficult tasks Teams encountered throughout the year.

Students

Some Teams met with the students in each homeroom or in assemblies early in the year, so the students would know why the Teams were there and what the Teams would be doing. Many Teams also developed and shared handouts with suggestions for increased student achievement.

Team members who ate lunch with students in the cafeteria and talked with them in other informal settings began to establish relationships fairly quickly. Many of these conversations provided ideas that Teams used for school improvement recommen-

dations. For example, students at one middle school told a Team member that the reason they did not read was because there were no reading materials at school that interested them. This information was used to convince the principal to purchase high interest, low vocabulary paperback books and magazines for the daily "Drop Everything And Read" time, a time each school day during which schools are required to concentrate solely on reading for an uninterrupted time period.

School Improvement Teams

Early involvement of the Assistance Team with members of the school improvement team was very important. At some schools, no school improvement plan existed even though the law required one. At other schools, Team members, including parent representatives, had been appointed by the principal instead of being elected the manner of selection prescribed by law. Assistance Team members met regularly with school leadership to study their operations and to review school improvement documents.

In many cases, Team members worked closely with leadership teams to modify the school's decision-making policies and school improvement plans. Team members also provided or recommended that staff be trained in site-based decision-making. At the Assistance Team's recommendation, at least one faculty sent a Team to North Carolina's Summer Teacher Academy session on site-based management.

Needs Assessment

One of the most critical assignments for entering schools was the development of the needs assessment report. The strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations documented in these reports served as the foundation for the year-long school improvement process. Teams spent the first 2 months of the school year compiling interview data; observing and conferencing with teachers; and studying test data, policies, and other school reports. From this information, the Teams developed comprehensive needs assessment reports. The needs assessments were

amended throughout the year as appropriate and new recommendations were added as information was gained. Assistance Team members also shared needs assessment revisions with the faculty.

Faculty's Reception of Teams

At the request of the NC State Board of Education, the Department of Public Instruction surveyed faculty members, asking them to share their initial impressions of the Assistance Teams. To maintain confidentiality, faculty members were told not to sign the survey forms. Results from the 15 schools indicated varying degrees of faculty acceptance of the Teams. According to the survey, two Teams were received very positively, six met overwhelming negativism, and the remaining seven Teams encountered a fairly neutral reaction. No correlation appeared to exist between initial faculty attitudes and subsequent student achievement. By the end of the school year, almost all Teams reported close positive working relationships with their faculties.

Exit Procedures

Teams spent the final month of the 1997-98 school year preparing to leave their sites. The Teams' major task as they finalized their school responsibilities was to prepare a comprehensive annual report. These annual reports gave results of exit interviews, test score data, and personnel information and provided recommendations for individual schools.

Exit interviews were held with superintendents, local boards of education, school administrators, staff members, parent representatives, and students. Some Teams chose to conduct individual interviews, others invited groups, such as grade-level teams, committees, or departments, to summarize major occurrences, challenges, and recommendations, while the remaining Teams met with the entire faculty as a group.

Several Teams conducted written exit surveys with faculty and staff members. One interesting survey asked school personnel to describe their feelings at

the beginning of the year in one word. The Teams followed up by asking for a one-word description of how those interviewed earlier in the year felt at the end of the year. Words used in August tended to be adjectives; i.e., *scared, intimidated, stressed, upset, or angry*. Words used in June were *relieved, happy, proud, overjoyed, or encouraged*.

In almost all instances, Teams had developed very positive relationships with members of the school communities. Some faculties expressed regret that the Teams were leaving and presented members with gifts and plaques of appreciation. Several Teams hosted faculties at breakfasts or luncheons to celebrate the schools' successes.

One of the final activities of the Assistance Team members was a celebration hosted by the School Improvement Division of the Department of Public Instruction. On this occasion, Teams presented their greatest successes, obstacles, three wishes, and recommendations for another year. These creative presentations were followed by remarks from Phil Kirk, Chairman of the State Board of Education; Michael E. Ward, Superintendent of Schools; and others. Special gifts were presented to each charter Assistance Team member.

SUMMARY

One of the most critical objectives for all Teams throughout the year was to establish positive, professional relationships with members of the school community. The ABCs reform effort in 1997-98 proved without doubt that all students are capable of learning regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. Teams entering low-performing schools in the future should encounter less resistance because of the proven track record the 1997-98 Teams established. Of 15 low-performing schools, 13 achieved exemplary status, 1 met expected growth, and 1 made adequate growth. The ongoing challenge will be to maintain the momentum in all of North Carolina's public schools, especially those selected for Assistance Teams during the 1998-99 school year. In 1998-99, Teams will be assigned in low-performing high schools for the first time, and it is hoped they will be as successful as the K-8 Teams were in their first year of implementation.

It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things (Machiavelli, as cited in Scheide, 1999).

Chapter Four

CHALLENGES: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

On August 7, 1998, the North Carolina State Board of Education identified 123 low-performing elementary and middle schools across the state based on the ABC Accountability Program standards measured by end-of-grade testing results. Assistance Teams were assigned to 15 schools. Twelve Assistance Teams prepared themselves to enter their assigned schools on August 11, 1997. An injunction obtained by a local board of education delayed one Team's entry until September 2, 1997. Many administrators, teachers, parents, students, local school board members, and communities were surprised and disappointed to learn their school had been designated as low performing. The initial reception of the Assistance Teams by the local school districts and by individual school personnel varied across the state. Because 1997-98 was the first year of providing Assistance Teams to help designated low-performing schools, many were apprehensive about the school year. Though each school served by an Assistance Team was different in the makeup of its staff, students, and resources, and they each had different philosophies, many issues needing resolution were common among the schools.

After conducting a needs assessment in the 15 schools, Assistance Teams identified common challenges as low academic achievement, ineffective instructional programs, low achievement expectations, lack of parental or community involvement, insufficient staff development, lack of communication, and the need for developing positive school climates. These problems are not unique to the 15 low-performing schools, because all educational settings may at one time be confronted with one or more of these problems.

LOW ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Two criteria for identifying a school as low performing are (a) 50% or more of the students tested are not performing at grade level, and (b) the school's growth rate is below its expected rate so that the school is declining over a 3-year period (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1995). The 15 schools assigned Assistance Teams for the 1997-98 school year were determined to be low performing using a composite of the growth and performance scores and the writing index from the end-of-grade tests. Students were below grade level in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Low student achievement, evidenced by test results, was the greatest challenge encountered by the Assistance Teams and the schools.

INEFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Curriculum Alignment

One of the major contributing factors to low student achievement was ineffective instructional programs and minimal curriculum development. According to Lezotte and Bancroft (1985), "Research is becoming more convincing about the belief that all students can demonstrate school success, especially when success is defined as the mastery of the essential curriculum" (p. 307). The *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* defines the curriculum in grades K-12. As Assistance Teams entered their schools, they discovered that many teachers either did not have copies of this document or did not use it for planning. The Teams found that staff training in the proper use of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was an immediate need. Several school systems had their own curriculum guides, and the Assistance Teams in these schools integrated local and state materials to promote effective lesson planning. Because students in North Carolina are tested on a specific hierarchy of skills, the Assistance Teams conveyed to teachers the importance of using the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for instructional planning. Schools implementing Montessori programs had an additional challenge of correlating Montessori lessons to the specific goals and objectives outlined in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for each grade level.

Instructional Planning and Management of Instructional Time Programs

Throughout the school year, the Assistance Teams focused on lesson planning. In some settings, Team found that teachers did not write weekly lesson plans nor did they establish benchmark goals for student achievement. Where written plans did exist, seldom did these plans align to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. The lack of collaborative planning within and across grade levels did not support effective, consistent instructional programs. Coordinating the services provided by resource personnel and the

classroom teachers was a challenge in some situations. Teachers providing support services did not always have the opportunity to plan directly with the classroom teachers. Though all of the Assistance Teams monitored lesson planning and instructional delivery, the Teams found it difficult in several settings to convince staff members that planning was an essential part of an effective instructional program.

Management of instructional time was also a significant problem in the schools. Levine and Lezotte (1990) describe one characteristic of effective schools as "the creation of time for read areas."

Exceptional Children's Programs

Several Assistance Teams closely monitored the Exceptional Children's Programs in their schools. Ensuring that student records were in compliance with state regulations and strengthening the overall Exceptional Children's Program were concerns in some settings. Providing teachers with current legislation concerning the Exceptional Children's Program and careful monitoring of student referrals and placements are ongoing challenges for all schools.

Supplemental Resources

The availability of supplemental instructional resources that supported the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was a challenge in the 15 low-performing schools. Materials available through the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, including *Strategies for Instruction in Mathematics*, *Writing Process: Activities and Resources*, *Reading Matrices*, *Matrices and Writing Matrices*, *Using Testlets*, and *Spelling in Use*, were not readily available for instructional planning. Students lacked materials and strategies for test-taking. The Assistance Teams found that many schools did not have effective tutorial programs for students who used materials aligned to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*.

Disaggregating Test Data for Instructional Planning

According to the Effective Schools Research, instructional decision making should be data driven. This model "permits teachers and schools to be versatile and flexible, and instructionally focused" (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985, p. 304). The use of disaggregated test data was not used effectively in many of the low-performing schools to develop an instructional program that would meet the individual needs of students. The staffs and Assistance Teams recognized the need for identifying and developing resources and strategies to raise the achievement levels of students performing at Levels I and II and to accelerate the rise in the number of students performing at levels III and IV. Often, the goals and objectives necessary for student achievement had not been developed as a result of analyzing test results. A systematic means for assessing student progress was not in place at some of the schools served by Assistance Teams. Teachers needed to learn how to interpret and use test data to plan more effective instruction.

Media Center and Technology

An effective media center promotes the learning process. Materials and resources should supplement and support the instructional program in each school setting. The Assistance Teams found that several media centers needed refurbishing, restructuring, automating, and updating. In some instances, book collections were outdated, making them useless in teaching the current curriculum. In another instance, students from some grade levels were unable to check out materials. Technology was also an area that needed attention. Some middle school students lacked proficiency to pass the state's technology competency test, other schools did not integrate technology into their instructional program, and several other schools had computer labs that were not operational for the students by the onset of the school year.

Teachers and principals lacked sufficient information on best teaching practices, varied teaching strategies and materials that promoted the achievement of all students, balanced reading programs, student-led conferences, and the use of assessment data to plan effective instructional programs. In some schools, teachers and principals needed site-based management training.

LOW ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

Across the state, the Assistance Teams found that many of the individuals working in low-performing schools had low expectations for their students. Some teachers needed to be convinced that their students could achieve higher performance levels. One individual asked, "What are we supposed to do with kids who cannot read?" Raising teacher expectations of their students and assisting them in conveying these expectations to the students and their parents was a challenge for many of the Assistance Teams.

LACK OF PARENTAL OR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The National Education Goal #8 states that, by the year 2000, "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children." The lack of both parental and community involvement was an area of concern in some of the low-performing schools. In some schools, parent organizations were not active at the beginning of the school year, so few parents attended the meetings. Improving parental involvement and initiating community partnerships were challenges for the schools.



INSUFFICIENT STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Assistance Teams analyzed staff development as part of the needs assessment and found that teachers needed on-site training to help them improve student achievement. Alignment instructional planning to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was a priority for the Teams. Teachers and principals lacked sufficient information on best teaching practices, varied teaching strategies and materials that promoted the achievement of all students, balanced reading programs, student-led conferences, and the use of assessment data to plan effective instructional programs. In some schools, teachers and principals needed site-based management training.



LACK OF COMMUNICATION

Improving communication, both internally among the staff and externally with the home and community, was addressed by the Assistance Teams. Many staff members lacked copies of school operating policies and procedures. In some cases, teacher and student handbooks were not available, and there was no orientation for new personnel or students. The Assistance Teams found a need for positive communication between the home and school. In some schools, staff had not placed a priority on communication between parents and teachers through newsletters, calendars, or informal communication methods. Communicating with parents concerning student progress was a problem for some schools. For example, one Team discovered a discrepancy in what teachers were communicating to parents regarding student achievement versus actual student performance, because half of the students in the school were on the honor roll but had scored at levels I and II on the end-of-grade tests.

NEED FOR DEVELOPING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

As the Teams entered their assigned schools, some found that the overall facility was uninviting and unsafe for students, contributing to a negative school climate. In most schools, incentives to improve both teacher and student morale or to celebrate academic achievement were lacking. Many teachers and other school staff had low expectations for student behavior, especially in schools without written disciplinary policies or procedures. Some schools did not have a code of student conduct and relied on a punishment model for monitoring student behavior. In one situation, the in-school suspension program lacked specific behavioral guidelines for students.

Developing collaborative relationships with the schools, the central office, and the local school boards was an initial constraint for each of the Assistance Teams. Some people in the low-performing schools feared that the Teams were going to "take over," so the Teams had to change this perception. Many individuals needed clarification that the ABCs legislation was not a temporary reform effort. Convincing teachers, principals, and parents that accountability was essential for improving student achievement in North Carolina and that Teams were not assigned to "take over" the daily school operations was a significant challenge.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Although the Assistance Teams and individual schools addressed many of the challenges that had been identified throughout the school year, cooperation and collaboration in developing plans to continue promoting school reform will be an ongoing priority. A major challenge for all of the schools is recruiting and retaining qualified instructional personnel and school leaders who will work collaboratively on behalf of students. Many of the Assistance Teams expressed concern over the number of transfer requests, indicating a potential increase in the turnover rate of personnel. Assistance Teams built capacity among the individuals in each setting, but continued progress depends on a stable and consistent staff. Other Teams recognized the difficulties some districts had in filling teacher vacancies. Providing support and effective mentoring for initially licensed or lateral entry personnel is essential for developing strong schools. A potential obstacle faced by all districts is attracting quality individuals to work in schools identified, or at risk of being identified, as low performing.

Each assistance Team developed a detailed plan for continued school improvement. Data collected from the annual reports showed that six principals could maintain the changes implemented during the 1997-98 school year. Two Assistance Teams recommended the development of a Professional Improvement Plan for their principals. In one of these cases, the Assistance Team recommended that the principal be reassigned and be placed on a Professional Improvement Plan. Two Principals were reassigned at the end of the school year. In five schools, the Assistance Teams believed the principals had the ability to continue the school improvement process and that mentoring or monitoring could help ensure that the positive gains achieved during 1997-98 school year would continue.

The North Carolina Assistance Teams will form a partnership with designated schools to empower staffs, students, and communities to enhance student academic achievement and performance in the pursuit of academic excellence by providing resources, professional development, technical assistance and ongoing assessment (Assistance Teams, Mission Statement, 1998).

Chapter Five

POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE 15 LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

The schools designated in August of 1997 as the 15 lowest performing elementary and middle schools in North Carolina made numerous accomplishments. These accomplishments were (a) increased student achievement and performance, (b) effective instructional programs, (c) higher achievement expectations of students, (d) increased parental and community involvement, (e) effective staff development, (f) improved communication, and (g) a more positive school climate and improved discipline. Throughout this narrative, schools depicted are examples of success, but success in a certain area is not limited to just the schools cited. All 15 schools made progress, and each school had experiences unique to its educational setting.



INCREASED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

The most significant accomplishment of the ABCs reform movement in 1997-98 was the proof that *all children are capable of learning*. The North Carolina End-of-Grade test results indicated that 13 of the 15 schools assigned Assistance Teams and designated as low performing reached exemplary status, 1 school made expected growth, and one school made adequate growth. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction verified these test scores on July 7, 1998.

The first year of implementing the Assistance Teams was successful, and children all across the state benefitted from the work done on their behalf. North Carolina students, teachers, administrators, and Assistance Team members initiated the process for building capacity for sustained academic achievement and performance.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Structured Curriculum Alignment

The restructuring of ineffective instructional programs to align the curriculum to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* was foremost in all 15 schools. The expectation was for teachers to review the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and other curricular materials for their grade levels and then implement a variety of instructional strategies to improve class presentations and student learning. One of the first objectives for the Assistance Teams was to make sure that all teachers had copies of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for their grade levels or subjects and the appropriate pacing guides. Assistance Teams reviewed the documents with the teachers and explained curriculum alignment through staff development activities. Also, Assistance Teams modeled best practices and curriculum alignment through demonstration lessons. These demonstration lessons focused on math, reading, writing and test-taking skills. For example, at Poe Montessori Magnet School (Wake County), the Assistance Team not only demonstrated curriculum alignment using effective teaching strategies but also provided the teachers with materials the Team had developed to improve math, reading, and writing skills while motivating children to do their best. The Assistance Team demonstrated to the teachers the use of these aligned learning centers, and the teachers then used them with their students. At Rex-Rennert (Robeson County), the Team helped teachers understand how to implement best practices for curriculum alignment into their classrooms. The Team gave workshops, demonstrated effective strategies in classroom presentations, co-taught with teachers, implemented grade-level focus groups, assigned mentors, and reviewed and monitored lesson plans.

Effective Lesson Plans

An integral part of a classroom teacher's daily activities is to develop and implement effective lesson plans. For instance, the Assistance Team at

Arlington Elementary School (Gaston County) helped teachers develop a system for creating lesson plans that focused on the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and the school's mission statement. At Weldon Middle School (Weldon City), the Assistance Team trained staff on lesson planning and curriculum integration. The Team also presented models of good lesson plans and worked with small groups and individuals to improve the quality and alignment of the lesson plans to the state curriculum. Feedback and classroom monitoring occurred throughout the school year. At Pinkston Street Elementary (Vance County), the Assistance Team scheduled and monitored grade-level planning and provided weekly written feedback on the lesson plans. While the aforementioned schools are examples of Assistance Teams and teachers working together to improve the focus and alignment of lesson plans, a common thread in all of the designated low-performing schools was an effort to improve what and how children learned. Another effort to improve teaching and learning was to educate teachers on how to interpret test data. The Assistance Team at Shamrock Gardens Elementary and Allenbrook Elementary Schools (Charlotte-Mecklenburg) illustrated data-driven planning by providing training for teachers so that data analysis was a part of their curriculum design.

Directed Time Management

Directed, focused time management was a positive outgrowth of Assistance Teams' observations of the school day. In some cases, school schedules changed to allow more instructional time. For example, the Assistance Team at Arlington Elementary School (Gaston County) devised a plan to improve time on task for students and teachers. The Team implemented grade-level tutorials, assigned literacy blocks, and added two buses for dismissal to increase time available for teaching and planning. The Union Hill Assistance Team (Guilford County) scheduled specific times for math, reading, and

writing, and then monitored the school setting to make sure this instructional time was used wisely and productively. The Team also recommended procedural changes for arrival and dismissal to save time. At Rex-Rennert Elementary (Robeson County), reorganizing the resource teachers' schedules allowed time for a common grade-level planning session that benefitted instruction. At both Princeville Montessori (Edgecombe County) and Pauline Jones Elementary School (Cumberland County), the Assistance Teams made provisions for uninterrupted instructional blocks of time by implementing new schedules. At Jones, there were 90 minutes of uninterrupted math and reading during the school day.

Additional Resources

One of the results of being designated as a low-performing school and being assigned an Assistance Team was that each school received a \$10,000 Goals 2000 grant to help pay for school reform. This allocation, along with some monies provided by local systems, enabled many of the schools to purchase additional materials, field trips, allocations for teacher and assistant positions, and staff development opportunities that helped establish effective instructional programs. Materials included *Blast Off*, *North Carolina Coach*, *NCDPI Testlets*, *The Writing Process: Activities and Resources*, *Strategies for Instruction in Mathematics*, and *Spelling in Use*. The Assistance Teams encouraged each school's site-based management teams to develop plans to spend these additional funds so that improving student achievement was an obtainable goal. At Weldon Middle School (Weldon City), the Assistance Team shared their personal materials with the faculty, pulled school resources together to share with all, recommended using Test Magic and the Accelerated Reader Program, and acquired the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* for teachers.

Focused Instructional Monitoring

The Assistance Teams monitored class presentations and the teachers' adherence to the goals of the lesson plans. The Assistance Team at Union Hill Elementary School (Guilford County) held grade-level meetings, provided integrated units for K-5 focusing on reading and math instruction, conducted classroom observations and gave feedback, and introduced sharing sessions within the school community on effective strategies to improve learning. One example of an Assistance Team's plan for effective monitoring was at Enfield Middle School (Halifax County), where the Team monitored administrators on all facets of the school program, conducted both formal and informal observations of classroom teachers, conducted staff training on the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument, circulated throughout the school and grounds, consistently implemented assessment strategies such as Test Magic, and provided guidance for the school improvement team. Another instance of a monitoring plan the Team implemented was at Lingerfeldt Elementary School (Gaston County). The Assistance Team conducted an overall assessment/profile of the reading program in grades 3, 4, and 5 during four sessions over 2 consecutive days, with feedback following the sessions. The Assistance Team then asked the system's director of instruction to also do an overall assessment of reading instruction for grades K-5. For math, the Team attended grade-level planning meetings and modeled the best use of pacing guides and ongoing assessment using testlets. The Assistance Team created a Math Action Team that met with school personnel several times to discuss the math program and make recommendations for next year to the school improvement team. Formal and informal observations occurred throughout the year to ensure that teachers adopted the new strategies for school improvement.

RESTRUCTURED MEDIA SERVICES/TECHNOLOGY

Several schools improved the quality of both their media services and technology programs to increase the overall effectiveness of the schools' instructional programs. For instance, the Assistance Team at Pinkston Street Elementary (Vance County) developed an action plan to improve media services in this pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade school. The Team provided staff development, encouraged the use of a Media Advisory Committee, received donated materials from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and community partners, and secured a grant for the school for the Accelerated Reader Program. They also purged old books, recommended implementing an automated checkout system, and suggested remodeling the media center into a child-centered facility.

At Poe Montessori Magnet School (Wake County), the Assistance Team recommended restoration of the computer lab. Poe held Technology Night so those parents of students in grades 3 through 5 could come into the lab to work at the computers with their children. This event was a huge success for the school and the community.

At Townsend Middle School (Robeson County), the Team trained staff in the use of computer programs for students and teachers. After the teachers were trained, they instructed students in using the Accelerated Reader and Cornerstone Math programs. The teachers used Integrate, a grade reporting system, to prepare student progress reports and reports cards. The Team also modeled lessons in computer instruction with special emphasis on eighth grade, provided teachers with a copy of the *North Carolina Computer Skills Curriculum*, assisted with a plan to help teachers learn basic computer skills, and assisted with the design and implementation of an instructional computer lab at the school.

The Rex-Rennert Elementary School Assistance Team (Robeson County) worked diligently to recover lost reading software and to develop a comprehensive technology plan. The Team suggested for the 1998-99 school year a revised long-term plan to upgrade and implement technology to support the instructional program and to prepare students for the state technology competency test.



HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The belief that all students can learn was a driving force behind North Carolina's inclusion of Assistance Teams in the educational reform effort for the 1997-98 school year. Assistance Teams across the state modeled high expectations for students, teachers, and administrators. At William R. Davie Middle School (Halifax County), the Assistance Team used several strategies to incorporate high expectations into school life. Student meetings where test-taking skills were developed, student recognitions, attendance banners, newsletters, and flyers gave Davie's students a new direction for academic achievement. At Allenbrook and Shamrock Gardens Elementary Schools (Charlotte-Mecklenburg), the Assistance Team recommended the implementation of six strategies to raise expectations for students: (a) designing developmentally appropriate units of study, (b) communicating to parents the schools' expectations, (c) recognizing and celebrating student success,

- (d) displaying student work, (e) using assessment to accelerate student achievement, and (f) appraising parents of students' progress and performance.

INCREASED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The effectiveness of increased parental involvement during the 1997-98 school year was evident in many of the 15 schools designated as low performing. Phillips School for Science, Mathematics, and Technology (Edgecombe County) increased parental involvement by surveying parents and providing parent bulletins. At Princeville Montessori (Edgecombe County), the Assistance Team planned and conducted a third-grade parent workshop and held parent information sessions on K-2 assessment.

One of the most unique strategies to increase parental involvement occurred at Union Hill Elementary School (Guilford County). The Assistance Team established a student-led conferencing night where parents came to review their students' portfolio. Parents or guests of 76.1% of the total school population arrived at the school to share in their students' achievements. The student-led conferencing night was a positive reward for students, parents, the school, and the Assistance Teams for their hard work, commitment, planning, and implementation.

Another successful instance of increased parental involvement occurred at William R. Davie Middle School (Halifax County). The Assistance Team presented a program about Davie on a local radio station and on UNC-TV. They also held a parent/community forum and made home visits. The Team published newsletters and flyers for parents to inform them of school events. There was a William R. Davie Day at Oak Grove Baptist Church for parents and community members.

The Assistance Team at Pauline Jones Elementary (Cumberland County) met with the school's business partner, participated in community meetings, conducted parent workshops, solicited community volunteers for incentive celebrations, and worked collaboratively with community volunteers to encourage the community to become an active part of the school.

EFFECTIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In all 15 schools, staff development was an important part of the positive change process. Teachers in these schools needed new ways to teach, motivate them, and involve students in the learning process. In some schools, the staff was trained in curriculum integration, lesson planning, reading, writing, and math. In other schools, class management skills, test data analysis, teaming, and stress management training were the areas needing the most attention. Local school staff, consultants, Assistance Team members, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction personnel, and central office personnel worked diligently to provide the training necessary to help improve student achievement. For example, a variety of people led staff development activities

at Poe Montessori Magnet School (Wake County). North Carolina Department of Public Instruction personnel came to the school and presented excellent training on using Math Strategies in the classroom. The school's language arts resource teacher conducted several training sessions in Guided Reading, while several other staff members led sessions about literacy circles. The Assistance Team presented workshops to the staff in lesson planning, reading strategies, centers, test-taking skills, best practices, and writing procedures. Wake County personnel offered four sessions in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, and many teachers attended sessions offered by The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Wake County, or Montessori consultants.

At Phillips School for Science, Mathematics, and Technology (Edgecombe County), the Assistance Team encouraged the school staff to apply to attend Teacher Academy. In the summer of 1998, two groups of Phillips' staff members plan to attend sessions about site-based management and learning styles. These groups plan to share the information with the entire staff during the 1998-99 school year.

At Princeville Montessori (Edgecombe County), the Assistance Team established the usefulness of data analysis by training in how to disaggregate assessment data. The Team also developed 6 weeks' reading and math assessments for the students, so those teachers had the necessary information test data to continue to improve academic performance. The Team taught staff in how to develop writing prompts for school use.

The Townsend Middle School Assistance Team (Robeson County) provided a variety of staff development opportunities in topics such as the use of the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*, understanding and teaching the writing process, focusing on holistic writing, and incorporating Silent Sustained Reading in the curriculum. Other topics the Teams addressed were math strategies, best practices, and use of computer programs.



IMPROVED SCHOOLWIDE COMMUNICATION

More effective communication was a positive occurrence in most of the 15 schools designated as low performing. Assistance Teams made recommendations and implemented strategies to improve communication within each school setting. At William R. Davie Middle School (Halifax County), the Team recommended the principal establish weekly written communication with the teachers, provide monthly newsletters, and develop a monthly calendar. To improve communication at Enfield Middle School (Halifax County), the Team devised several strategies such as mentoring/monitoring all administrative communications, revising the absentee report, sending letters to parents informing them why their student received a suspension, and modeling timely communication through the use of memos. To set a climate for open communication at Lingerfeldt Elementary (Gaston County), the Assistance Team attended the Community Involvement Forum, Parental Involvement Forums, PTO meetings, faculty meetings, grade-level meetings, school improvement team planning session, and central office meetings. The Team established a Student Council and remained involvement in Student Council activities. The Team also worked with the media to communicate positively with the public about the school.

More Knowledge of the ABCs

At the beginning of the school year, many school staff members had little or no knowledge of the specifics of the ABCs legislation or the Excellent Schools Act, and this lack of knowledge contributed to poor communication. Assistance Teams across the state had to attack this problem early in the year and educate school communities concerning the law. Many teachers were very upset about the teacher-testing component and confused that part of the Excellent Schools Act with the ABCs legislation. Open lines of communication between Assistance Team members and school staff members were necessary for achieving goals. Teams explained the law during faculty meetings; gave handouts from The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction; clarified information for site-based management teams; discussed concerns with teachers, administrators, staff, and central office personnel; invited North Carolina Department of Public Instruction personnel to schools to answer questions; and generally created an open door policy to the school communities.

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE AND DISCIPLINE

Better Discipline

Several schools improved student discipline to establish an effective instructional program. As examples, the Assistance Teams developed, implemented, and monitored schoolwide disciplinary plans in Pauline Jones Elementary School (Cumberland County), Allenbrook Elementary School and Shamrock Gardens Elementary School (Charlotte-Mecklenburg), Arlington Elementary School (Gaston), Pinkston Street Elementary School (Vance County), and Townsend Middle School (Robeson County). Assistance Teams used various strategies to improve (a) staff training in positive disciplinary programs, (b) modeling positive disciplinary techniques and effective classroom management skills during

demonstration lessons and other interactions with students, (c) developing incentives to motivate better behavior, and (d) creating school climate committees.

Collaborative Relationships

Partners for excellence, the motto for Assistance Teams, best described the desired relationship between Assistance Teams and school personnel for all 15 schools. In most schools, Assistance Teams and school personnel worked together to obtain this goal; however, several Assistance Teams dealt with compliant behavior or behavior that resisted change and reform. Many schools were open and accepting of the Assistance Teams and the expertise they brought with them. These schools recognized that, with the Assistance Teams' help, students, teachers, and administrators could perform at a higher level in a more inviting atmosphere. By the end of the year, collaborative relationships between schools and Assistance Teams were firmly in place, creating a true partnership where teacher morale improved. For example, the Assistance Team at Lingerfeldt Elementary (Gaston County) described their relationship with the staff as exceptional and also stated that many staff members emerged as school leaders during the year. The Assistance Team at Enfield Middle School (Halifax County) used the words "cooperative" and "proactive" when describing the school staff, the central office staff, and the local board of education. The Weldon School Assistance Team (Weldon City) used several strategies to develop a better relationship with the staff. The Team operated with an open door policy where the staff could voice their concerns, and the Team supported all teachers with problematic issues and made a special effort to counsel new teachers appropriately. At Phillips School for Science, Mathematics, and Technology (Edgecombe County), the Team wrote in their year-end report that significant accomplishments resulted from the cooperative efforts of students, faculty, staff, administration, community, and volunteers.

SUMMARY

All 15 schools benefitted from the ABCs reform. Curriculum alignment occurred, student achievement and performance increased, lesson planning design transformed, positive relationships grew, professional staff development transpired, instructional programs changed, parental involvement increased, and communication improved. The most important value of the reform movement was that those in local schools accepted and understood that if educators teach children properly, they learn eagerly. High expectations and good teaching result in more learning opportunities and improved academic achievement for children.



Chapter Six

THE RESULTS

The State Board of Education developed the ABCs of Public Education in response to the School-based Management and Accountability Program, Senate Bill 1139 (Appendix B), enacted by the General Assembly in June 1996. The ABCs of Public Education focuses on strong accountability, with an emphasis on high educational standards, teaching the basics, and maximum local control. The ABCs accountability model for elementary and middle schools was first implemented in 1996-97.

Three composite scores determine a school's ABCs' status. These three composites are expected growth, exemplary growth, and performance. The expected growth standard is based on three factors: statewide average growth, the previous performance of students in the school, and a statistical adjustment, which is needed whenever students' test scores are compared from one year to the next. The exemplary growth standard factors in an additional 10% above the statewide average growth. Growth composites are based on 2 years of end-of-grade test data for reading and mathematics and 3 years of data from the NC Writing Test. The performance composite (a percentage of students scoring at or above grade level) is based on reading, mathematics, and writing scores available for the current accountability year.

For K-8 schools, actual growth is determined by compared the mean (average) end-of-grade test scores at each grade level for reading, writing, and mathematics to mean scores from the previous year. Actual growth is subtracted from the expected and the exemplary growth standards at each grade level in reading and mathematics. The difference is divided by the standard deviation and the result is the standard

growth. Standard growth values for each grade level in each subject are summed, the writing improvement index is added, and the result is the expected and the exemplary growth composites.

The third composite used in determining a school's status under the ABCs is the performance composite. This composite summarizes the performance of students in a K-8 school in reading, writing, and mathematics. The performance composite is obtained by summing the numbers of students at or above Level III in each content area across grades 3-8 for the elementary/middle model, dividing this sum by the numbers of students with valid scores in each content area in each grade in the elementary/middle school. The number is multiplied by 100 to convert it to a percentage. The performance composite reports the scores on the end-of-grade testing in terms of the percentages of students at each of four achievement levels (see Chapter Nine for a definition of each achievement level).

Results of the first year's work of the Assistance Teams in the 15 designated low-performing schools are provided in Tables 1 and 2. These tables were created by using data collected and analyzed during the 1996-97 and 1997-98 accountability years. Table 1 provides the system, school code, and school name of each of the 15 schools and includes each school's grade span, performance composite, and the final ABCs growth status of each of the two accountability years. Table 2 illustrates how well each school addressed one of the chief goals of the ABCs accountability program, reducing the numbers of students in lower achievement levels.

TABLE 1

Growth & Performance of Low-Performing Schools Receiving Assistance

LEA/ School Code & Name	Accountability Year	Grade Span	Performance Composite	Growth Status
260 Cumberland/ 405 Pauline Jones Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	3-5	35.1 47.9	Low-performing Exemplary
330 Edgecombe/ 332 Phillips Math Science	1996-97 1997-98		42.0 52.0	
334 Princeville Montessori Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	PK-3	16.7 46.7	Low-performing Exemplary
360 Gaston/ 308 Arlington Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	K-6	36.5 44.2	Low-performing Exemplary
438 Lingerfeldt Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	PK-6	41.4 57.6	Low-performing Exemplary
410 Guilford/ 580 Union Hill Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	PK-5	34.4 51.9	Low-performing Exemplary
420 Halifax/ 324 Enfield Middle	1996-97 1997-98		41.1 56.6	
376 William R. Davie Middle	1996-97 1997-98	6-8	35.7 56.7	Low-performing Exemplary
422 Weldon/ 318 Weldon High ^a	1996-97 1997-98	6-12	32.8 53.0	Low-performing Exemplary
Weldon Middle	1996-97 1997-98	6-8		
600 Charlotte-Mecklenburg/ 308 Allenbrook Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	K-5	41.6 50.7	Low-performing Exemplary
527 Shamrock Gardens Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	K-6	37.8 42.9	

TABLE 1

Growth & Performance of Low-Performing Schools Receiving Assistance

LEA/ School Code & Name	Accountability Year	Grade Span	Performance Composite	Growth Status
780 Robeson/ 392 Rex-Rennert Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	PK-6	41.0 48.4 ^b	Low-performing Adequate Performance
410 Townsend Middle	1996-97 1997-98	5-8	36.1 45.0	Low-performing Exemplary
910 Vance/ 356 Pinkston Street Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	PK-6	23.7 38.8	Low-performing Exemplary
920 Wake/ 532 Poe Elementary	1996-97 1997-98	K-5	31.8 50.0	Low-performing Exemplary

^aDuring 1996-97, Weldon High was a 6-12 school. In 1997-98, Weldon became two independent schools, a middle and a high school.

^bPerformance Composite was not significantly below 50% with application of confidence band.

TABLE 2**Distribution of End-of-Grade Scores in Schools Receiving Assistance**

School	Achievement Level			
	I	II	III	IV
	1996-97 (Year 1 of ABCs)			
Pauline Jones Elementary	49	111	85	15
Phillips Math Science	167	330	324	81
Princeville Montessori	26	33	22	9
Arlington Elementary	94	171	149	28
Lingerfeldt Elementary	49	123	143	29
Union Hill Elementary	68	134	110	24
Enfield Middle	109	274	306	127
William R. Davie	54	224	209	70
Weldon High/Middle	64	172	149	42
Allenbrook Elementary	77	154	138	26
Shamrock Gardens	96	196	150	28
Rex-Rennert Elementary	56	131	146	30
Townsend Middle	151	245	148	26
Pinkston Street Elementary	82	157	86	11
Poe Elementary	21	52	25	9
Totals	1163	2507	2190	555

TABLE 2

Distribution of End-of-Grade Scores in Schools Receiving Assistance

School	Achievement Level			
	I	II	III	IV
	1997-98 (Year 2 of ABCs)			
Pauline Jones Elementary	37	95	106	22
Phillips Math Science	110	292	384	116
Princeville Montessori	13	35	32	10
Arlington Elementary	71	168	148	55
Lingerfeldt Elementary	31	97	159	57
Union Hill Elementary	50	117	114	55
Enfield Middle	56	261	372	127
William R. Davie	42	176	251	88
Weldon High/Middle	40	160	172	55
Allenbrook Elementary	55	114	129	45
Shamrock Gardens	74	157	134	39
Rex-Rennert Elementary	59	126	141	37
Townsend Middle	83	205	225	57
Pinkston Street Elementary	58	136	119	23
Poe Elementary	7	49	42	9
Totals	786	2188	2528	795

Note. The ABCs Tools 1997-98 Summary Distribution and 1996-97 Summary Statistics were used for this analysis. Each student's reading, mathematics, and writing score is counted in its respective level, e.g., if a student scores at Level III in reading, mathematics, and writing, that student is counted three times in Level III.

North Carolina can be proud of the work of the Assistance Teams and the faculties in the low-performing schools. Preliminary results provide evidence that the Assistance Team process used to help low-performing schools made a difference in student achievement. The ten percent increase in the percentage of students at or above grade level is a significant increase and the challenge is to continue growth in these schools (State Superintendent Mike Ward, personal communication, July 7, 1997).

Chapter Seven

LESSONS LEARNED BY STATE ASSISTANCE TEAMS

As the State Board of Education commits to sending Assistance Teams to more schools, there must be careful documentation of the experiences that worked to bring about improved student achievement and performance in the 15 lowest performing schools in North Carolina during 1997-98. Lessons learned by the Assistance Teams during the second year of the state's ABCs accountability model hold important messages. The messages are sound strategies for educators, parents, students, policy makers, and anyone concerned with improved student achievement and performance. While the messages fall into broad categories that address and complement the contents of this publication, two overarching messages speak loudly and clearly.

The first message is the importance of training and assistance that comes from the heart. The effort to assist schools in improving student achievement and performance should be both sensitive and caring work. Caring and forming trusting relationships reference the affective domains of teaching, learning, and assistance. Based upon the reality that every individual has a desire to be cared for and encouraged, the Teams became agents of engrossment. Engrossment is the reception and respect given to others (Noddings, 1992). These professional educators were dedicated to empowering schools, teachers, and students to take control of the teaching and learning process in their respective schools.

The second message is the importance of training and assistance that comes from both theoretical and practical knowledge. Trained professionals develop, share, and deliver best practices that drive improved student achievement and performance. The Teams worked with teachers and students on the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics in grades K-8. The Teams collaborated with staff to design staff training based on services needed and retraining that encompassed both personal and professional development. Theory-based staff development sessions focused on two areas: (a) providing professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators who would reach students and (b) building and sustaining capacity for long-term change. Assistance Teams engaged in needs assessments, personnel evaluations, data analysis, curriculum alignment, mentoring, monitoring, classroom management, and other developmentally appropriate practices.

Using best practices, 60 educators, who firmly believed every child could learn and was entitled to a quality education, set out to improve achievement and performance in North Carolina's lowest performing schools. Key lessons learned by Assistance Teams include:

1. Curriculum should be data driven and relate to the school improvement plan. Strategies in reading, writing, and math should start on the first day of the school year.

- Assessment and monitoring should be part of the daily instructional plan.
 - Disaggregated data should be shared with both teachers and students and be incorporated in the schools' and teachers' planning process.
 - Student awareness invites student ownership of the ABCs.
 - All areas of the curriculum must be monitored.
 - Every teacher should integrate reading, writing, and math across the curriculum.
 - Periodic work sessions should be held to help all teachers keep a balanced view of the curriculum.
 - Teachers should teach, assess, and reteach the curriculum, when necessary.
2. Teachers are the *catalysts for improving student performance*. High expectations and relationship building are integral to an effective instructional program. Teachers must focus on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and have high expectations of all students.
- Effective lesson planning and delivery are essential. Reviewing information, monitoring, testing, and assessing should be included in lesson plans.
 - Teaching is as much monitoring student progress as it is instructing. Quality charts, data disaggregation, grading, and student conferences are the primary focus of student assessment.
 - Students, like the staff and Teams, must be kept abreast of the school's status and their individual status as they relate to improved achievement and performance.
 - The saying "as goes the leadership, so goes the school" means that the principal's and central office staff's ability, attitude, and assistance determine the success or failure of the total school.
- Improvement must be systemic, with strong elementary schools leading into strong middle schools, and strong middle schools leading into strong high schools.
 - Even the best teachers need renewal, recognition, and revival.
 - Teachers must have the tools to work with the various ability levels of children, i.e. human and material resources and support.
3. The school must invite parents to all school events and keep them informed of all school activities.
- Schools have a responsibility to educate all children.
 - Communication with parents must be open, honest, and ongoing.
 - Teamwork is essential in all efforts to improve student taken together, the preceding sections provide a achievement and performance.
 - A Team's work ethics and bonding must be established before entering a system or before working with children.
 - Team members must establish and follow protocol. Whenever possible, the Team leader person should speak for the Team.
 - Concerted efforts must be made to build upon and use the expertise of Team members.
 - The Team must become an integral part of the school and should learn the school's social context and organizational culture.
 - The Team should model high expectations of all students, teachers, and leaders.
 - The Team must model a conscientious work ethic at all times.
 - The Team must be visible, open, and honest and engage in clear communication with teachers, students, and parents.

The Assistance Teams learned powerful lessons from their experiences in the low-performing schools. The most powerful lesson was dispelling the myth that poor students, rural students, and African-American students would have lower achievement. Poor children, rural children, and African-American students in schools across North Carolina made marked improvement in both achievement and performance. With Caring, focused, and strategic instruction, all children can learn. Simply put, all children will learn if we care and expect them to do so.



While the path to educational change is often chaotic and uncertain, the results for all children are priceless (Sizer, 1996).

Chapter Eight

THE INNOVATIVE PROCESS OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

INITIATING AND IMPLEMENTING COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Taken together, the preceding sections provide a fascinating and intriguing account of how the ABCs of Public Education was successfully initiated and put into practice. This document vividly illustrates how strong accountability, emphasis on the basics and high educational standards, and greater local control resulted in improved student growth and performance. With the implementation of Assistance Teams as a major component of the ABCs legislation, teams of educators worked diligently throughout 15 low-performing schools to make progress in student achievement in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Working in the Teams' favor was their knowledge and understanding that all change involves problems, anxieties, and struggles. Recognizing this phenomenon as natural and inevitable enabled the Teams to understand the challenging aspects of changing schools under the accountability legislation. Despite the natural resistance, ambiguity, and uncertainty embedded within this change process, these schools increased their capacity as learning organizations, thereby better serving children. Understanding how people in these schools experienced change served to improve the process by which the ABCs of Public Education was put into practice. Sizer's (1991) attitude toward comprehensive and systemic change is one way to explain the pace, nature, and process of change in these low-performing schools: "To get the needed gains for kids, we adults must expect and endure the pain that comes with ambitious rethinking and redesign of schools. To pretend that serious restructuring can be done without honest confrontation is a cruel illusion" (p. 34).

The extensive monitoring, comprehensive review, ongoing assistance, and regular feedback enabled these schools' staffs to identify and implement best practices and sustain those ideas working well. The team of educators with their varied experiences productively and deliberately worked daily to assist the staffs in these low-performing schools to become more effective. As the professional teams worked together in these schools, they provided the coordination, coherence and persistence needed to initiate, modify, and implement successful ideas, practices, and strategies. While the state Assistance Teams had a short timetable for improving student achievement and building capacity, the Teams stayed focused. Furthermore, these Assistance Teams provided these schools with opportunities to question and to reflect upon certain practices,

beliefs, and expectations. Although some people in the district viewed the Teams as outsiders, the Teams' high degree of commitment to improved academic achievement was the central focus. An important goal for the Assistance Teams was to develop each school's capacity for actively using the reform ideas over time to improve student achievement, leadership, parental involvement at each school.

Though school reforming challenging because of different experiences, viewpoints, and skills, educational reformers assert that these differences contain the necessary ingredients for productive action and successful outcomes. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) provided yet another frame of reference for explaining the progress that occurred in these 15 low-performing schools during the second year of implementing the ABCs of Public Education:

Striving for progress has both good and bad features. All change, including progress contains ambivalence and dilemmas because, when we set off on a journey to achieve significant change, we do not know in advance all the details of how to get there, or even what is it going to be like when we arrive. And in most cases we are not setting off but more being swept along by the forces of change. Positive change is highly exciting and exhilarating as it generates new learning, new commitments, new accomplishments, and greater meaning, but anxiety, uncertainty, exhaustion and loss of confidence also mark the way, especially at the early stages. What we are faced with is how to appreciate the good and bad of change and to approach it with a view to altering the mix by strengthening the good features and reducing the bad. (p. 345)



CHANGE AND PROGRESS

Change and progress are complex, and those involved in this innovation had to confront the anticipated and unpredictable issues and challenges as they arose during this process. Conflict was not viewed as bad but instead as integral to change. As the ABCs of Public Education was translated into practice, the change process became more difficult for some Teams because of resistance and denial from those within these schools that their school was low performing. Yet, for those Teams who earned credibility and trustworthiness, progress and change occurred more rapidly. Given that these schools differed fundamentally and consequentially, the school's response to the change was determined and shaped by the local resources, beliefs, traditions, and clientele.

Along with the challenges that emerged throughout the first year of implementing the Assistance Teams, leaders from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction gave the Assistance Teams strong support. The Division of School Improvement staff provided overall supervision, support, and management for the Teams. By assigning Teams to sections within the division according to geographic areas of the state, regional issues were addressed through extensive communication. To ensure the success of the ABCs of Public Education, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction staff served as a resource for the Teams. For example, information, publications, materials,

and services were available through this agency to the Assistance Teams. The Division of School Improvement staff communicated with the Teams, and they conveyed how much they valued and trusted the Teams to work closely with these schools to improve student performance. The Division of School Improvement staff's dedication and commitment to these schools cannot go unrecognized, for they provided the vision, direction, technical assistance, and leadership as the Teams performed their multiple roles and responsibilities. As champions of change and the state's implementation branch, the Division of School Improvement personnel provided the Teams with support, resources, materials and supplies critical for change and progress to occur in these low-performing sites. The Director of School Improvement made it clear to everyone involved that the Teams were to help these schools: "Touch the hearts, open minds and teach!" This quote charged Teams with building and developing in these schools their own capacity for continuous improvement and improving student achievement. We all hope the schools will continue to make meaningful, data-driven decisions about curriculum, instruction, and best practices for enabling all children to learn.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

As North Carolina heads toward the 21st century, the ABCs legislation is the foundation for a new approach to making a difference in the lives of children. While these first-year results of implementing Assistance Teams are noteworthy, the State Board of Education and other key players must identify ways to sustain the norms of continuous improvement. The challenge for the North Carolina State Board of Education is to ensure the schools continue to have strong leadership, engage in meaningful staff development and learning opportunities, have high expectations for children, employ varied instructional practices, and have sufficient funding. The schools need support in establishing procedures for continuing assistance and ideas to help new professionals remain in the profession over time.

Support, assistance, monitoring, recognition, and follow-up are essential for creating school-level capacity. Building capacity and sustaining improvement changes are most desirable but not achievable if organizations fail to develop meaningful ways to support schools in moving forward. Making comprehensive school reform continue into the next century is a challenge for North Carolina.

In this document, the 1997-98 Assistance Teams have both qualitatively and quantitatively recounted the story of how an educational agency began the journey of implementing the state-mandated ABCs of Public Education to improve student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics. The premise of the ABCs of Public Education was for the public school community to motivate each child to learn, to achieve, and to fulfill his or her potential. This first year of implementing the Assistance Teams is quite simply a story of successful change.

The ABCs of Public Education in North Carolina: A Journey Toward Excellence captures how these 15 low-performing schools and the Teams assigned to them worked diligently

to improve student performance. This educational reform movement in its first year of implementation of Assistance Teams had substantial and positive results throughout our state. Reform can be a long, sometimes rigorous, journey. Yet, in spite of the obstacles, the low-performing schools in North Carolina did make significant progress in the lives of children. As the state stays the course of comprehensive and systemic educational reform, we, the Assistance Teams of 1997-98, hope those children who improved academically during the first year of implementing the Assistance Teams will continue doing so, and we want children throughout North Carolina public schools to experience similar success.



Chapter Nine

GLOSSARY

ABCs of Public Education Comprehensive plan to improve public schools based on three goals of strong accountability: an emphasis on the basics, high educational standards, and the local control of schools. Grades K-8 results were first reported following the 1996-97 school year. High schools came into the program in the 1997-98 school year. Results for K-8 and high schools for 1997-98 were reported in August 1998.

ABCs Tools Software Computes the sum of the differences between the exemplary growth and actual growth in each grade and subject. An overall writing index is also computed for grades 4 and 7. No scores have to be calculated manually. This software is provided to Local Education Agency testing coordinators by the Department of Public Instruction, Division of Accountability. The information and examples provided here are to assist educators and others in understanding the process for determining if growth standards have been met.

Accountability The "A" of the ABCs. Accountability is the way public schools assure the public of results. The ABCs model is a school-based accountability model. Reporting and accountability to the public occur at both the school level and system level.

Achievement Levels Refer to the End-of-Grade Tests. There are four levels of performance:

1. Level I-Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area to be successful at the next grade level.
2. Level II-Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.

3. Level III-Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.

4. Level IV-Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade level work.

Actual Growth Determined by subtracting the pretest (last year's EOG or grade pretest) mean from the posttest (the current year's EOG test) mean at each grade level in reading and mathematics.

Adequate Performance The school failed to reach the growth standard established for it by the State Board of Education's formula, and the school has less than or equal to 50% of the students below grade level (K-8) or below Level III/proficiency (grades 9-12). This designation was formerly known as "No Recognition."

Assistance Teams Assigned by the State Board of Education to work with individual schools to help implement school improvement plans to further student achievement.

Basics The "B" of the ABCs. The basic subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics are measured through state assessments and will be the sole indicators used in the accountability model. The goal is to focus on students learning necessary skills.

Composite Scores Summarize student performance in a school in reading, writing, and mathematics. Composite scores are used to determine whether a school meets its expected standard or its exemplary standard for incentive awards. ABCs Tools software is used to compute the sum of the differences between the expected growth and actual growth in each grade for reading and mathematics (grades 3-8). The software also computes the sum of the differences between the

exemplary growth and actual growth in each grade and subject. An overall writing index is also computed for grades 4 and 7. If a school's composite is greater than or equal to 0, the goal is met. The composite gives a representative picture of a school's overall performance. In other words, a school could be below the exemplary standard for fifth-grade reading but above the exemplary standard in other grades and subjects. Because the composite includes performance across all grades and subjects, this school could still reach the exemplary standard overall and, therefore, be eligible for incentive awards.

Control (local control) The "C" of the ABCs. Local control means local school districts have the flexibility to make some of the decisions that were formerly made by the General Assembly and the State Board of Public Instruction. Local control as described in SB 1139 places responsibility for student learning, student performance improvement, and most matters pertaining to local schools in their communities with local boards of education, while allowing greater flexibility in managing the resources necessary to improve student performance. To ensure successful implementation, local school boards (a) are allowed increased flexibility in the expenditure of state funds; and (b) may be granted waivers of certain state laws, regulations, and policies that inhibit their ability to reach local accountability goals.

Curriculum Alignment Classroom instruction follows the objectives of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

Demographic Data Show the characteristics of human populations, such as size, growth, density, distribution, and vital statistics.

End-of-Grade (EOG) Tests Achievement tests that provide information about the overall proficiency of students in specific content areas at the completion of a grade. The tests measure how much a student has grown educationally in a year and whether groups of students are performing according to grade-level expectations. These tests are curriculum-based accountability tests, and scores are presented as

developmental scale scores. The tests provide limited information about the strengths and weaknesses of individual students in specific skill areas.

Exemplary K-8 The school achieves 10% above the expected growth standard; high schools, the baseline plus 5% of the difference between the baseline and 100.

Expected Growth Also called Reasonable Growth. The amount of growth that would be reasonably expected over a year's time (see Growth Standard).

Focused Holistic Score Used in assessments to evaluate the writing skills of students in grades 4, 7, and grade 10 (English II).

Growth The cohort difference in test score achievement across grades/years. Growth is computed as the difference between the test scores (developmental scale scores) of a group in Year 1 and the test scores of the same group in Year 2.

Growth Standard Expected growth rate for a particular school based on the school's previous performance, statewide growth, and a statistical adjustment needed whenever test scores of students from one year are compared to next year's score. All information is placed in a formula to generate expected growth and exemplary growth.

Low-Performing The school failed to reach the growth standard established for it by the State Board of Education's formula, and more than 50% of the students were below grade level (K -8) or below Level III/ proficiency (9-12).

Low Performing Assigned Assistance Team. A school that fell far below its growth standard established for it by the State Board of Education's formula, and where the majority of students are considered low performing (below grade level, below proficiency). The school is assigned an Assistance Team to help the school's staff devise ways to help students achieve at higher levels.

Mean The mean (or average) is the sum of the scores divided by the total number of scores.

Performance Standard The absolute achievement or the percentage of students in a school at or above grade level. Used in conjunction with the growth standard to identify schools that qualify for recognition and assistance. Schools with more than half of their students performing below grade level and whose growth is lower than the expected growth will be targeted for intervention.

Professional Staff Development Defines any activity designed by a school to increase the ability of its teachers to impact positively on student growth in performance in the identified areas. These activities include curriculum development, program design, professional readings, study groups, case studies, on-line discussion groups, self-studies, visitations, peer coaching, mentorships, seminars, and action research.

Regression Toward the Mean Students who earn a high score on the pretest will earn a somewhat lower score on the posttest, whereas students with a low pretest score will earn a somewhat higher score on the posttest.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) The written school-level plan that includes strategies for (a) improving student performance, taking into account the school's annual performance goals set by the State Board of Education; (b) how and when improvements will be implemented; (c) use of state funds; and (d) requests for waivers. Each School Improvement Plan must be in effect for no more than 3 years and may be amended as often as necessary or appropriate.

School Improvement Team The team of staff and parents who develop the school improvement plan. These teams make key decisions about the school's operation and how to improve student performance.

Standard Course of Study The revised North Carolina Standard Course of Study provides a vision of what all students should know and be able to do and defines the minimum standards for school systems to follow and to communicate to the public. State accountability measures are derived from the state curriculum.

Standardized Test A test designed to provide a systematic sample of individual performance, administered according to prescribed directions, scored in conformance with definite rules, and interpreted in reference to certain normative information.



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Appendix A

ASSISTANCE TEAM REVIEWERS AND LEADERS

NAME	TITLE	ABC ASSISTANCE TEAM ROLE
Adger, Sonja	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Allen, Shirley	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Barnett, Susan	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Brinkley, Anne	Elementary School Principal	Leader
Carter, Diane	High School Math Teacher	Reviewer
Chappell, Pat	Elementary School Principal	Leader
Coffey, Judy	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Costello, Janie	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Daves, Gail	Elementary School Principal	Leader
Dula, Katy	Middle School Language Arts & Social Studies Teacher	Reviewer
Frank, Carol	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Fulcher, Linda	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Garrett, Alice	High School Principal	Leader
Hall, Christine	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Halyard, Brenda	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Harris, Melinda	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Hooker, Sandra	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Huneycutt, Sharon	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Johnson, Shirley	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Jones, Theresa	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Leiphart, Wesley	High School Math & German Teacher	Reviewer
Lowry, Pamela	Middle School Language Arts & Social Studies Teacher	Reviewer
Mazzaferro, Ken	Elementary School Principal	Leader
McLaughlin, Linda	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Mizelle, Richard	Associate Professor of Psychology	Reviewer
Morrison, Carolyn	Elementary School Principal	Leader
Mozingo, Terri	Middle Schools Director	Leader
Payne, Brenda	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Pearce, Karen	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Perry, Michael	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Pittman, Susan	Elementary School Counselor	Reviewer
Pope, Phyllis	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Rhyne, Patricia	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Ridge, Brock	Elementary School Principal	Reviewer
Sadoff, Arnold	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Skipper, Larry	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Spangler, Vicki	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer
Ward, Sharon	Elementary School Principal	Leader
Whisnant, Judy	Elementary School Teacher	Reviewer

Appendix B
RATIFIED SENATE BILL 1139

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1995 SESSION
RATIFIED BILL
CHAPTER 716
SENATE BILL 1139**

AN ACT TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S ABC'S PLAN IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH AN ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND INCREASE LOCAL FLEXIBILITY AND CONTROL, AND TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

-SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

Section 1. G.S. 115C-12(9) reads as rewritten:

A(9) Miscellaneous Powers and Duties. —All the powers and duties exercised by the State Board of Education shall be in conformity with the Constitution and subject to such laws as may be enacted from time to time by the General Assembly. Among such duties are:

- a. To certify and regulate the grade and salary of teachers and other school employees.
- b. To adopt and supply textbooks.
- c. To adopt rules requiring all local boards of education to implement the Basic Education Program on an incremental basis within funds appropriated for that purpose by the General Assembly and by units of local government. Beginning with the 1991-92 school year, the rules shall require each local school administrative unit to implement fully the standard course of study in every school in the State in accordance with the Basic Education Program so that every student in the State shall have equal access to the curriculum as provided in the Basic Education Program and the standard course of study.

The Board shall establish benchmarks by which to measure the progress that each local board of education has made in implementing the Basic Education Program. The Board shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and to the General Assembly by December 31, 1991, and by February 1 of each subsequent year on each local board's progress in implementing the Basic Education Program, including the use of State and local funds for the Basic Education Program.

The Board shall develop a State accreditation program that meets or exceeds the standards and requirements of the Basic Education Program. The Board shall require each local school administrative unit to comply with the State accreditation program to the extent that funds have been made available to the local school administrative unit for implementation of the Basic Education Program.

The Board shall use the State accreditation program to monitor the implementation of the Basic Education Program.

- c1. To issue an annual 'report card' for the State and for each local school administrative unit, assessing each unit's efforts to improve student performance based on the growth in performance of the students in each school and taking into account progress over the previous years' level of performance and the State's performance in comparison with other states. This assessment shall take into account factors that have been shown to affect student performance and that the State Board considers relevant to assess the State's efforts to improve student performance.
- c3. To develop a system of school building improvement reports for each school building. The purpose of school building improvement reports is to measure improvement in the growth in student performance at each school building from year to year, not to compare school buildings. The Board shall include in the building reports any factors shown to affect student performance that the Board considers relevant to assess a school's efforts to improve student performance. Local school administrative units shall produce and make public their school building improvement reports by March 15, 1997, for the 1995-96 school year, by October 15, 1997, for the 1996-97 school year, and annually thereafter. Each report shall be based on building-level data for the prior school year.
- c4. To develop guidelines, procedures, and rules to establish, implement, and enforce the School-Based Management and Accountability Program under Article 8B of this Chapter in order to improve student performance, increase local flexibility and control, and promote economy and efficiency.
- d. To formulate rules and regulations for the enforcement of the compulsory attendance law.
- e. To manage and operate a system of insurance for public school property, as provided in Article 38 of this Chapter.

In making substantial policy changes in administration, curriculum, or programs the Board should conduct hearings throughout the regions of the State, whenever feasible, in order that the public may be heard regarding these matters."

Sec. 2. Part 4 of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, G.S. 115C-238.1 through G.S. 115C-238.8, is recodified as Article 8B of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, G.S. 115C-105.20 through G.S. 115C-105.27.

Sec. 3. Article 8B of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, as recodified by Section 2 of this act, reads as rewritten:

"ARTICLE 8B.

"School-Based Management and Accountability Program.

"Part 1. Implementation of Program.

A§ 115C-105.20. School-Based Management and Accountability Program.

- (a) The General Assembly believes that all children can learn. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the

mission of the public school community is to challenge with high expectations each child to learn, to achieve, and to fulfill his or her potential. With that mission as its guide, the State Board of Education shall develop a School-Based Management and Accountability Program. The primary goal of the Program shall be to improve student performance.

(b) In order to support local boards of education and schools in the implementation of this Program, the State Board of Education shall adopt guidelines, including guidelines to:

- (1) Assist local boards and schools in the development and implementation of school-based management under Part 2 of this Article.
- (2) Recognize the schools that meet or exceed their goals.
- (3) Identify low-performing schools under G.S. 115C-105.30, and create assistance teams that the Board may assign to schools identified as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.30. The assistance teams should consist of currently practicing teachers and staff, representatives of institutions of higher education, school administrators, and others the State Board considers appropriate.
- (4) Enable assistance teams to make appropriate recommendations under G.S. 115C-105.31.
- (5) Establish a process to resolve disputes between local boards and schools in the development and implementation of school improvement plans under G.S. 115C-105.22(b1). This process shall provide for final resolution of the disputes.

"§ 115C-105.21. Local participation in the Program.

- (a) Local school administrative units shall participate in the School-Based Management and Accountability Program.
- (b1) The School-Based Management and Accountability Program shall provide increased local control of schools with the goal of improving student performance. Local boards of education:
 - (1) Are allowed increased flexibility in the expenditure of State funds, in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.21A; and
 - (2) May be granted waivers of certain State laws, regulations, and policies that inhibit their ability to reach local accountability goals, in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.21B.
- (c) The School-Based Management and Accountability Program shall be based upon an accountability, recognition, assistance, and intervention process in order to hold each school and the school's personnel accountable for improved student performance in the school.

"Part 2. School-Based Management.

"§ 115C-105.21A. Budget flexibility.

- (a) Consistent with improving student performance, a local board shall provide maximum flexibility to schools in the use of funds to enable the schools to accomplish their goals.
- (b) Subject to the following limitations, local boards of education may transfer and may approve transfers of funds between funding allotment categories:
 - (1) In accordance with a school improvement plan accepted under G.S. 115C-105.22, State funds allocated for teacher assistants may be transferred only for personnel (i) to serve students only in

kindergarten through third grade, or (ii) to serve students primarily in kindergarten through third grade when the personnel are assigned to an elementary school to serve the whole school. Funds allocated for teacher assistants may be transferred to reduce class size or to reduce the student-teacher ratio in kindergarten through third grade so long as the affected teacher assistant positions are not filled when the plan is amended or approved by the building-level staff entitled to vote on the plan or the affected teacher assistant positions are not expected to be filled on the date the plan is to be implemented. Any State funds appropriated for teacher assistants that were converted to certificated teachers before July 1, 1995, in accordance with Section 1 of Chapter 986 of the 1991 Session Laws, as rewritten by Chapter 103 of the 1993 Session Laws, may continue to be used for certificated teachers.

- (2) In accordance with a school improvement plan accepted under G.S. 115C-105.22, (i) State funds allocated for classroom materials/instructional supplies/equipment may be transferred only for the purchase of textbooks; (ii) State funds allocated for textbooks may be transferred only for the purchase of instructional supplies, instructional equipment, or other classroom materials; and (iii) State funds allocated for noninstructional support personnel may be transferred only for teacher positions.
- (3) No funds shall be transferred into the central office allotment category.
- (4) Funds allocated for exceptional children and funds allocated for driver's education shall not be transferred.
- (5) Funds allocated for classroom teachers may be transferred only for teachers of exceptional children, for teachers of at-risk students, and for authorized purposes under the textbooks allotment category and the classroom materials/instructional supplies/equipment allotment category.
- (6) Funds allocated for vocational education may be transferred only in accordance with any rules that the State Board of Education considers appropriate to ensure compliance with federal regulations.
- (7) Funds allocated for career development shall be used in accordance with Section 17.3 of Chapter 324 of the 1995 Session Laws.

"§ 115C-105.21B. Waivers of State laws, rules, or policies.

- (a) When included as part of a school improvement plan accepted under G.S. 115C-105.22, local boards of education shall submit requests for waivers of State laws, rules, or policies to the Board of Education. A request for a waiver shall (i) identify the school making the request, (ii) identify the State laws, rules, or policies that inhibit the school's ability to improve student performance, (iii) set out with specificity the circumstances under which the waiver may be used, and (iv) explain how the requested waiver will permit the school to improve student performance. Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the State Board shall grant waivers only for the specific schools for which they are requested and shall be used only under the specific circumstances for which they are requested.
- (b) When requested as part of a school improvement plan, the State Board of Education may grant waivers of:
 - (1) State laws pertaining to class size, teacher certification, and the duty-free period for classroom teachers under G.S. 115C-301.1; and
 - (2) State rules and policies, except those pertaining to public school State salary schedules and employee benefits for school employees, the instructional program that must be offered under the Basic Education Program, the system of employment for public school teachers and administrators set out

in G.S. 115C-287.1 and G.S. 115C-325, health and safety codes, compulsory attendance, the minimum lengths of the school day and year, and the Uniform Education Reporting System.

- (c) The State Board also may grant requests received from local boards for waivers of State laws, rules, or policies that affect the organization, duties, and assignment of central office staff only. However, none of the duties to be performed under G.S. 115C-436 may be waived.
- (d) Notwithstanding subsections (b) and (c) of this section, the State Board shall not grant waivers of G.S. 115C-12(16)b. regarding the placement of State-allotted office support personnel, teacher assistants, and custodial personnel on the salary schedule adopted by the State Board.
- (e) Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, the State Board may grant requests received from local boards for waivers of State laws, rules, or policies pertaining to the placement of principals on the State salary schedule for public school administrators in order to provide financial incentives to encourage principals to accept employment in a school that has been identified as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.30. The State Board shall act on requests under this subsection at the first Board meeting following receipt of each request.
- (f) Except as provided in subsection (e) of this section, the State Board shall act within 60 days of receipt of all requests for waivers under this section.
- (g) The State Board shall, on a regular basis, review all waivers it has granted to determine whether any rules should be repealed or modified or whether the Board should recommend to the General Assembly the repeal or modification of any laws.

"§ 115C-105.22. Development and approval of school improvement plans.

- (b1) In order to improve student performance, each school shall develop a school improvement plan that takes into consideration the annual performance goal for that school that is set by the State Board under G.S. 115C-105.28. The principal of each school, representatives of the assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, and teacher assistants assigned to the school building, and parents of children enrolled in the school shall constitute a school improvement team to develop a school improvement plan to improve student performance. Parents serving on school improvement teams shall reflect the racial and socioeconomic composition of the students enrolled in that school and shall not be members of the building-level staff. Parental involvement is a critical component of school success and positive student achievement; therefore, it is the intent of the General Assembly that parents, along with teachers, have a substantial role in developing school improvement plans. To this end, school improvement team meetings shall be held at a convenient time to assure substantial parent participation. The strategies for improving student performance shall include a plan for the use of staff development funds that may be made available to the school by the local board of education to implement the school improvement plan. The strategies may include a decision to use State funds in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.21A. The strategies may also include requests for waivers of State laws, rules, or policies for that school. A request for a waiver shall meet the requirements of G.S. 115C-105.21B.

Support among affected staff members is essential to successful implementation of a school improvement plan to address improved student performance at that school. The principal of the school shall present the proposed school improvement plan to all of the principals, assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, and teacher assistants assigned to the school building for their review and vote. The vote shall be by secret ballot. The principal shall submit the school improvement plan to the

local board of education only if the proposed school improvement plan has the approval of a majority of the staff who voted on the plan.

The local board of education shall accept or reject the school improvement plan. The local board shall not make any substantive changes in any school improvement plan that it accepts. If the local board rejects a school improvement plan, the local board shall state with specificity its reasons for rejecting the plan; the school improvement team may then prepare another plan, present it to the principals, assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, and teacher assistants assigned to the school building for a vote, and submit it to the local board to accept or reject. If no school improvement plan is accepted for a school within 60 days after its initial submission to the local board, the school or the local board may ask to use the process to resolve disagreements recommended in the guidelines developed by the State Board under G.S. 115C-105.20(b)(5). If this request is made, both the school and local board shall participate in the process to resolve disagreements. If there is no request to use that process, then the local board may develop a school improvement plan for the school. The General Assembly urges the local board to utilize the school's proposed school improvement plan to the maximum extent possible when developing such a plan.

A school improvement plan shall remain in effect for no more than three years; however, the school improvement team may amend the plan as often as is necessary or appropriate. If, at any time, any part of a school improvement plan becomes unlawful or the local board finds that a school improvement plan is impeding student performance at a school, the local board may vacate the relevant portion of the plan and may direct the school to revise that portion. The procedures set out in this subsection shall apply to amendments and revisions to school improvement plans.

"§ 115C-105.25. Distribution of staff development funds.

Any funds the local board of education makes available to an individual school building to implement the school improvement plan at that school shall be used in accordance with that plan.

Each local board shall distribute seventy-five percent (75%) of the funds in the staff development funding allotment to the schools to be used in accordance with that school's school improvement plan. By October 1 of each year, the principal shall disclose to all affected personnel the total allocation of all funds available to the school for staff development and the superintendent shall disclose to all affected personnel the total allocation of all funds available at the system level for staff development. At the end of the fiscal year, the principal shall make available to all affected personnel a report of all disbursements from the building-level staff development funds, and the superintendent shall make available to all affected personnel a report of all disbursements at the system level of staff development funds.

"§ 115C-105.26. Creation of the Task Force on School-Based Management.

(a) There is created the Task Force on School-Based Management under the State Board of Education.

The Task Force shall be composed of 20 members appointed as follows:

- (1) The Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- (2) One member of the State Board of Education, one parent of a public school child, and two at-large members appointed by the State Board of Education;
- (3) Two members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate;

- (4) Two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- (5) One member of a local board of education appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate after receiving recommendations from The North Carolina State School Boards Association, Inc.;
- (6) One member of a local board of education appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives after receiving recommendations from The North Carolina State School Boards Association, Inc.;
- (7) One local school superintendent appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate after receiving recommendations from the North Carolina Association of School Administrators;
- (8) One local school superintendent appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives after receiving recommendations from the North Carolina Association of School Administrators;
- (9) One school principal appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate after receiving recommendations from the Tar Heel Association of Principals/Assistant Principals and the Division of Administrators of the North Carolina Association of Educators;
- (10) One school principal appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives after receiving recommendations from the Tar Heel Association of Principals/Assistant Principals and the Division of Administrators of the North Carolina Association of Educators;
- (11) One school teacher appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate after receiving recommendations from the North Carolina Association of Educators, Inc., the North Carolina Federation of Teachers, and the Professional Educators of North Carolina, Inc.;
- (12) One school teacher appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives after receiving recommendations from the North Carolina Association of Educators, Inc., the North Carolina Federation of Teachers, and the Professional Educators of North Carolina, Inc.;
- (13) Repealed by Session Laws 1995, c. 324, s. 17.
- (16) One representative of business and industry appointed by the Governor;
- (17) One representative of institutions of higher education appointed by the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina; and
- (18) One county commissioner appointed by the State Board of Education after receiving recommendations from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.

Members of the Task Force shall serve for two-year terms.

All members of the Task Force shall be voting members. Vacancies in the appointed membership shall be filled by the officer who made the initial appointment. The Task Force on School-Based Management shall select a member of the Task Force to serve as chair of the Task Force.

Members of the Task Force shall receive travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 120-3.1, G.S. 138-5, and G.S. 138-6.

(b) The Task Force shall:

- (1) Advise the State Board of Education on the development of guidelines for local boards of education and schools to implement school-based management as part of the School-Based Management and Accountability Program;

- (2) Advise the State Board of Education on how to assist the public schools so as to facilitate the implementation of school-based management;
 - (3) Advise the State Board of Education about publications to be produced by the Department of Public Instruction on the development and implementation of school improvement plans;
 - (4) Report annually to the State Board of Education on the implementation of school-based management in the public schools on the first Friday in December. This report may contain a summary of recommendations for changes to any law, rule, and policy that would improve school-based management.
- (c) The Department of Public Instruction shall, with the approval of the State Board of Education, provide staff to the Task Force at the request of the Task Force.
- (d) The State Board of Education shall appoint a Director of the Task Force on School-Based Management.

"§ 115C-105.27. Parent involvement programs and conflict resolution programs as part of school improvement plans.

A school is encouraged to include a comprehensive parent involvement program as part of its school improvement plan under G.S.115C-105.22. The State Board of Education shall develop a list of recommended strategies that it determines to be effective, which building level committees may use to establish parent involvement programs designed to meet the specific needs of their schools. The Board shall make the list available to local school administrative units and school buildings by the beginning of the 1994-95 school year.

A school is encouraged to review its need for a comprehensive conflict resolution program as part of the development of its school improvement plan under G.S.115C-105.22. If a school determines that this program is needed, it may select from the list developed by the State Board of Education under G.S. 115C-81(a4) or may develop its own materials and curricula to be approved by the local board of education.

"Part 3. School-Based Accountability.

"§ 115C-105.28. Annual performance goals.

The School-Based Management and Accountability Program shall (i) focus on student performance in the basics of reading, mathematics, and communications skills in elementary and middle schools, (ii) focus on student performance in courses required for graduation and on other measures required by the State Board in the high schools, and (iii) hold schools accountable for the educational growth of their students. To those ends, the State Board shall design and implement an accountability system that sets annual performance standards for each school in the State in order to measure the growth in performance of the students in each individual school.

"§ 115C-105.29. Performance recognition.

- (a) The personnel in schools that achieve a level of expected growth greater than one hundred percent (100%) at a level to be determined by the State Board of Education are eligible for financial awards in amounts set by the State Board. Schools and personnel shall not be required to apply for these awards. For the purpose of this section, 'personnel' includes the principal, assistant principal, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, and teacher assistants assigned to that school.
- (b) The State Board shall establish a procedure to allocate the funds for these awards to the local school administrative units in which the eligible schools are located. Funds shall become available for expendi-

ture July 1 of each fiscal year. Funds shall remain available until November 30 of the subsequent fiscal year for expenditure for:

- (1) Awards to the personnel;
- (2) The purposes authorized in a plan that has been:
 - a. Developed and voted on by the personnel in the same manner that a school improvement plan is approved under G.S. 115C-105.22(b1);
 - b. Approved by a majority of the personnel who vote on the plan; and
 - c. Submitted to and approved by the local board of education.

The local board shall approve this plan unless the plan involves expenditures of funds that are not for a public purpose or that are otherwise unlawful.

"§ 115C-105.30. Identification of low-performing schools.

- (a) The State Board of Education shall design and implement a procedure to identify low-performing schools on an annual basis. Low-performing schools are those in which there is a failure to meet the minimum growth standards, as defined by the State Board, and a majority of students are performing below grade level.
- (b) Each identified low-performing school shall notify the parents of students attending that school that the State Board of Education has found that the school has failed to meet the minimum growth standards, as defined by the State Board, and a majority of students in that school are performing below grade level. This notification also shall include a description of the steps the school is taking to improve student performance.

"§ 115C-105.31. Assistance teams; review by State Board.

- (a) The State Board of Education may assign an assistance team to any school identified as low-performing under this Article or to any other school that requests an assistance team and that the State Board determines would benefit from an assistance team. The State Board shall give priority to low-performing schools in which the educational performance of the students is declining. The Department of Public Instruction shall, with the approval of the State Board, provide staff as needed and requested by an assistance team.
- (b) When assigned to an identified low-performing school, an assistance team shall:
 - (1) Review and investigate all facets of school operations and assist in developing recommendations for improving student performance at that school.
 - (2) Evaluate at least semiannually the personnel assigned to the school and make findings and recommendations concerning their performance.
 - (3) Collaborate with school staff, central offices, and local boards of education in the design, implementation, and monitoring of a plan that, if fully implemented, can reasonably be expected to alleviate problems and improve student performance at that school.
 - (4) Make recommendations as the school develops and implements this plan.
 - (5) Review the school's progress.

- (6) Report, as appropriate, to the local board of education, the community, and the State Board on the school's progress. If an assistance team determines that an accepted school improvement plan developed under G.S. 115C-105.22 is impeding student performance at a school, the team may recommend to the local board that it vacate the relevant portions of that plan and direct the school to revise those portions.
- (c) If a school fails to improve student performance after assistance is provided under this section, the assistance team may recommend that the assistance continues or that the State Board take further action under G.S. 115C-105.32.
- (d) The State Board shall annually review the progress made in identified low-performing schools.

"§ 115C-105.32. Dismissal or removal of personnel; appointment of interim superintendent.

- (a) Upon the identification of a school as low-performing under this Part, the State Board shall proceed under G.S. 115C-325(q)(1) for the dismissal of the principal assigned to that school.
- (b) The State Board shall proceed under G.S. 115C-325(q)(2) for the dismissal of teachers, assistant principals, directors, and supervisors assigned to a school identified as low-performing in accordance with G.S. 115C-325(q)(2).
- (c) The State Board may appoint an interim superintendent in a local school administrative unit:
 - (1) Upon the identification of more than half the schools in that unit as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.30; or
 - (2) Upon the recommendation from an assistance team assigned to a school located in that unit that has been identified as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.30. This recommendation shall be based upon a finding that the superintendent has failed to cooperate with the assistance team or has otherwise hindered that school's ability to improve.

The State Board may assign any of the powers and duties of the local superintendent and the local finance officer to the interim superintendent that the Board considers are necessary or appropriate to improve student performance in the local school administrative unit. The interim superintendent shall perform all of these assigned powers and duties. The State Board of Education may terminate the contract of any local superintendent entered into on or after July 1, 1996, when it appoints an interim superintendent. The Administrative Procedure Act shall apply to that decision. Neither party to that contract is entitled to damages.

- (d) In the event the State Board has appointed an interim superintendent and the State Board determines that the local board of education has failed to cooperate with the interim superintendent or has otherwise hindered the ability to improve student performance in that local school administrative unit or in a school in that unit, the State Board may suspend any of the powers and duties of the local board of education that the State Board considers are necessary or appropriate to improve student performance in the local school administrative unit. The State Board shall perform all of these assigned powers and duties for a period of time to be specified by the State Board.
- (e) If the State Board suspends any of the powers and duties of the local board of education under subsection (d) of this section and subsequently determines it is necessary to change the governance of the local school administrative unit in order to improve student performance, the State Board may recommend this change to the General Assembly, which shall consider, at its next session, the future governance of the identified local school administrative unit."

Sec. 4. Article 6A of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is repealed.

Sec. 5. G.S. 115C-39 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C-39. Removal of board members; suspension of duties by State Board.

- (a) In case the State Board of Education has sufficient evidence that any member of a local board of education is not capable of discharging, or is not discharging, the duties of his office as required by law, or is guilty of immoral or disreputable conduct, the State Board of Education shall notify the chairman of such board of education, unless such chairman is the offending member, in which case all other members of such board shall be notified. Upon receipt of such notice there shall be a meeting of said board of education for the purpose of investigating the charges, and if the charges are found to be true, such board shall declare the office vacant: Provided, that the offending member shall be given proper notice of the hearing and that record of the findings of the other members shall be recorded in the minutes of such board of education.
- (b) In the event the State Board of Education has appointed an interim superintendent under G.S. 115C-105.32 and the State Board determines that the local board of education has failed to cooperate with the interim superintendent, the State Board shall have the authority to suspend any of the powers and duties of the local board and to act on its behalf under G.S. 115C-105.32."

Sec. 6. G.S. 115C-274 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C- 274. Removal.

- (a) Local boards of education are authorized to remove a superintendent who is guilty of immoral or disreputable conduct or who shall fail or refuse to perform the duties required of him by law. In case the State Board of Education has sufficient evidence at any time that any superintendent of schools is not capable of discharging, or is not discharging, the duties of his office as required by law or is guilty of immoral or disreputable conduct, the State Board of Education shall report this matter to the board of education employing said superintendent of schools. It shall then be the duty of that board of education to hear the evidence in the case and, if after careful investigation it shall find the charges true, it shall declare the office vacant at once and proceed to elect a successor: Provided, that such superintendent shall have the right to try his title to office in the courts of the State.
- (b) If the superintendent shall fail in the duties enumerated in G.S. 115C-276(g), 115C-276(h), 115C-276(i), or any other duties as may be assigned him, he shall be subject, after notice, to an investigation by the State Board of Education or by his board of education for failure to perform his duties. For persistent failure to perform these duties, the State Board of Education may revoke the superintendent's certificate and the superintendent may be dismissed by his board of education.
- (c) The identification by the State Board of Education of more than half the schools in a local school administrative unit as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.30 is evidence that the superintendent is unable to fulfill the duties of the office, and the State Board may appoint an interim superintendent to carry out the duties of the superintendent under G.S. 115C-105.32, may revoke the superintendent's certificate under this section, may dismiss the superintendent under G.S. 115C-105.32, or may take any combination of these actions."

Sec. 7. G.S. 115C-296 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(d) The State Board of Education may revoke or refuse to renew a teacher's certificate when:

- (1) The Board identifies the school in which the teacher is employed as low-performing under G.S.115C-105.30; and
- (2) The assistance team assigned to that school under G.S. 115C-105.31 makes the recommendation to revoke or refuse to renew the teacher's certificate for one or more reasons established by the State Board in its rules for certificate suspension or revocation."

-STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Sec. 7.1. G.S.115C-288(a) is rewritten to read:

"§ 115C- 288. Powers and duties of principal.

- (a) To Grade and Classify Pupils. — The principal shall have authority to grade and classify pupils except a principal shall not require additional testing of a student entering a public school from a school governed under Article 39 of this Chapter if test scores from a nationally standardized test or nationally standardized equivalent measure that are adequate to determine the appropriate placement of the child are available."

Sec. 8. G.S. 115C-325 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(q) Procedure for Dismissal of School Administrators and Teachers Employed in Low-Performing Schools.

- (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section or any other law, the State Board:
 - a. Shall suspend with pay a principal who has been assigned to a school for more than two years before the State Board identifies that school as low-performing and assigns an assistance team to that school under Article 8B of this Chapter; and
 - b. May suspend with pay a principal who has been assigned to a school for no more than two years before the State Board identifies that school as low-performing and assigns an assistance team to that school under Article 8B of this Chapter.

These principals shall be suspended with pay pending a hearing before a panel of three members of the State Board. The purpose of this hearing, which shall be held within 60 days after the principal is suspended, is to determine whether the principal shall be dismissed. The panel shall order the dismissal of the principal, at which time the period of suspension with pay shall expire, unless the panel makes a public determination that the principal has established that the factors that led to the identification of the school as low-performing were not due to the inadequate performance of the principal. The State Board shall adopt procedures to ensure that due process rights are afforded to principals under this subsection. Decisions of the panel may be appealed on the record to the State Board, with further right of judicial review under Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

- (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section or any other law, this subdivision shall govern the State Board's dismissal of teachers, assistant principals, directors, and supervisors assigned to schools that the State Board has identified as low-performing and to which the State Board has assigned an assistance team under Article 8B of this Chapter. The State Board shall dismiss a teacher, assistant principal, director, or supervisor when the State Board receives two consecutive evaluations that include written findings and recommendations regarding that person's inadequate performance from the assistance team. These findings and recommendations shall be substantial evidence of the inadequate performance of the teacher or school administrator.

The State Board may dismiss a teacher, assistant principal, director, or supervisor when:

- a. The State Board determines that the school has failed to make satisfactory improvement after the State Board assigned an assistance team to that school under G.S. 115C-105.31; and
- b. That assistance team makes the recommendation to dismiss the teacher, assistant principal, director, or supervisor for one or more grounds established in G.S. 115C-325(e)(1) for dismissal or demotion of a career teacher.

A teacher, assistant principal, director, or supervisor may request a hearing before a panel of three members of the State Board within 30 days of any dismissal under this subdivision. The State Board shall adopt procedures to ensure that due process rights are afforded to persons recommended for dismissal under this subdivision. Decisions of the panel may be appealed on the record to the State Board, with further right of judicial review under Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

- (3) The State Board of Education or a local board may terminate the contract of a school administrator dismissed under this subsection. Nothing in this subsection shall prevent a local board from refusing to renew the contract of any person employed in a school identified as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.30.
- (4) Neither party to a school administrator contract is entitled to damages under this subsection.
- (5) The State Board shall have the right to subpoena witnesses and documents on behalf of any party to the proceedings under this subsection."

Section 8.1. The State Board of Education shall develop a comprehensive plan to improve reading achievement in the public schools. The plan shall be fully integrated with State Board plans to improve student performance and promote local flexibility and efficiency. The plan shall be based on reading instructional practices for which there is strong evidence of effectiveness in existing empirical scientific research studies on reading development. The plan shall be developed with the active involvement of teachers, college and university educators, parents of students, and other interested parties. The plan shall, if appropriate, include revision of the standard course of study, revision of teacher certification standards, and revision of teacher education program standards.

Sec. 8.2 The State Board of Education shall critically evaluate and revise the standard course of study so as to provide school units with guidance in the implementation of balanced, integrated, and effective programs of reading instruction. The General Assembly believes that the first, essential step in the complex process of learning to read is the accurate pronunciation of written words and that phonics, which is the knowledge of relationships of the symbols of the written language and the sounds of the spoken language, is the most reliable approach to arriving at the accurate pronunciation of a printed word. Therefore, these programs shall include early and systematic phonics instruction. The State Board shall provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and other interested parties to participate in this evaluation and revision.

Sec. 8.3 In order to reflect changes to the standard course of study and to emphasize balanced, integrated, and effective programs of reading instruction that include early and systematic phonics instruction, the State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina and with the North Carolina Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, shall review, evaluate, and revise current teacher certification standards and teacher education programs within the institutions of higher education that provide coursework in reading instruction.

Sec. 8.4 Local boards of education are encouraged to review and revise existing board policies, local curricula, and programs of professional development in order to reflect changes to the standard course of study and to emphasize balanced, integrated, and effective programs of reading instruction that include early and systematic phonics instruction.

Sec. 8.5 (a) The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 31, 1996, and annually thereafter on the comprehensive plan developed under Section 1 of this act. The first report shall include revisions made to the standard course of study, teacher certification standards, and teacher education programs. Subsequent reports shall address the effectiveness, based on factors including improved student performance in reading, of the implementation of the plan. The State Board may make recommendations to the General Assembly in any of its reports.

(b) The State Board shall disseminate to local boards of education by March 31, 1997, the changes to the standard course of study.

Sec. 8.6 G.S. 115C-81 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(h) Character Education – Local boards of education may require the teaching of the following character traits in the public schools:

- (1) Courage – Having the determination to do the right thing even when others don't and the strength to follow your conscience rather than the crowd; and attempting difficult things that are worthwhile.
- (2) Good judgment – Choosing worthy goals and setting proper priorities; thinking through the consequences of your actions; and basing decisions on practical wisdom and good sense.
- (3) Integrity – Having the inner strength to be truthful, trustworthy, and honest in all things; acting justly and honorably.
- (4) Kindness – Being considerate, courteous, helpful, and understanding of others; showing care, compassion, friendship, and generosity; and treating others as you would like to be treated.
- (5) Perseverance – Being persistent in the pursuit of worthy objectives in spite of difficulty, opposition, or discouragement; and exhibiting patience and having the fortitude to try again when confronted with delays, mistakes, or failures.
- (6) Respect – Showing high regard for authority, for other people, for self, for property, and for country; and understanding that all people have value as human beings.
- (7) Responsibility – Being dependable in carrying out obligations and duties; showing reliability and consistency in words and conduct; being accountable for your own actions; and being committed to active involvement in your community.
- (8) Self-Discipline – Demonstrating hard work and commitment to purpose; regulating yourself for improvement and restraining from inappropriate behaviors; being in proper control of your words, actions, impulses, and desires; choosing abstinence from premarital sex, drugs, alcohol, and other harmful substances and behaviors; and doing your best in all situations."

Sec. 8.7 G.S. 115C-98 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(b1) A local board of education may establish a community media advisory committee to investigate and evaluate challenges from parents, teachers, and members of the public to textbooks and supplementary

instructional materials on the grounds that they are educationally unsuitable, pervasively vulgar, or inappropriate to the age, maturity, or grade level of the students. The State Board of Education shall review its rules and policies concerning these challenges and shall establish guidelines to be followed by community media advisory committees.

The local board, at all times, has sole authority and discretion to determine whether a challenge has merit and whether challenged material should be retained or removed."

-LOCAL FLEXIBILITY

Sec. 9 G.S. 115C-84(d) is repealed.

Sec. 10 G.S. 115C-302(a)(1) reads as rewritten:

- "(1) Academic Teachers – Regular state-allotted teachers shall be employed for a period of 10 calendar months. Each local board of education shall establish a set date on which monthly salary payments to regular State-allotted teachers shall be made. This set pay date may differ from the end of the calendar month of service. Teachers shall only be paid for the days employed as of the set pay date. Payment for a full month when days employed are less than a full month is prohibited as this constitutes prepayment. Teachers employed for a period of 10 calendar months in year-round schools shall be paid in 12 equal installments. Any individual teacher who is not employed in a year-round school may be paid in 12 monthly installments if the teacher so requests on or before the first day of the school year. Such request shall be filed in the local school administrative unit which employs the teacher. The payment of the annual salary in 12 installments instead of 10 shall not increase or decrease said annual salary nor in any other way alter the contract made between the teacher and the said local school administrative unit; nor shall such payment apply to any teacher who is employed for a period of less than 10 months. Included within the 10 calendar months employment shall be annual vacation leave at the same rate provided for State employees, computed at one twelfth (1/12) of the annual rate for State employees for each calendar month of employment; which shall be provided by each local board of education at a time when students are not scheduled to be in regular attendance. However, vacation leave for instructional personnel who do not require a substitute shall not be restricted to days that students are not in attendance. Included within the 10 calendar months employment each local board of education shall designate the same or an equivalent number of legal holidays occurring within the period of employment for academic teachers as those designated by the State Personnel Commission for State employees; on a day that employees are required to report for a workday but pupils are not required to attend school due to inclement weather, a teacher may elect not to report due to hazardous travel conditions and to take an annual vacation day or to make up the day at a time agreed upon by the employee and the employee's immediate supervisor or principal. Within policy adopted by the State Board of Education, each local board of education shall develop rules designating what additional portion of the 10 calendar months not devoted to classroom teaching, holidays, or annual leave shall apply to service rendered before the opening of the school term, during the school term, and after the school term and to fix and regulate the duties of state-allotted teachers during said period, but in no event shall the total number of workdays exceed 200 days. If one or more scheduled teacher workdays are displaced due to hazardous weather conditions, a local board may select dates, including dates beyond the 10 calendar months during which teachers and their supervisors may agree to make up the displaced days provided the workdays fall within the fiscal year. Local boards may approve school improvement plans that include teacher workdays outside the 10 calendar months provided the workdays fall within the fiscal year. A teacher

and the teacher's supervisor may agree to schedule workdays outside the 10 calendar months provided the workdays fall within the fiscal year. Teachers may be paid on the tenth calendar month pay date for workdays scheduled to occur after the tenth calendar month but before the end of the fiscal year. A teacher who resigns, is dismissed, or whose contract is not renewed and who fails to make up previously agreed upon workdays scheduled after the 10 calendar months shall repay to the local board any salary payments owed due to the failure to make up the workdays. A teacher who continues to be employed by a local board but fails to make up previously agreed upon workdays scheduled after the 10 calendar months may be subject to dismissal under G.S. 115C-325. Local boards of education shall consult with the employed public school personnel in the development of the 10-calendar-months schedule."

Sec. 11 G.S. 115C-47(23) reads as rewritten:

(23) To Purchase Equipment and Supplies – Local boards shall contract for equipment and supplies pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 115C-522(a) and 115C-528."

Sec. 12. G.S. 115C-47(28) reads as rewritten:

"(28) To Enter Lease Purchase and Installment Purchase Contracts – Local boards may enter into lease purchase and installment purchase contracts as provided in G.S. 115C-528."

Sec. 13 G.S. 115C-522(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) It shall be the duty of local boards of education to purchase or exchange all supplies, equipment and materials in accordance with contracts made by or with the approval of the Department of Administration. Title to instructional supplies, office supplies, fuel and janitorial supplies, enumerated in the current expense fund budget and purchased out of State funds, shall be taken in the name of the local board of education which shall be responsible for the custody and replacement: Provided, that no contracts shall be made by any local school administrative unit for purchases unless provision has been made in the budget of the unit to pay for the purchases, unless surplus funds are on hand to pay for the purchases, or unless the contracts are made pursuant to G.S. 115C-47(28) and G.S. 115C-528 and adequate funds are available to pay in the current fiscal year the sums obligated for the current fiscal year, and in order to protect the State purchase contractor, it is made the duty of the governing authorities of the local units to pay for these purchases promptly and in accordance with the terms of the contract of purchase."

Sec. 14 Article 37 of Chapter 115C is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C- 528. Lease purchase and installment purchase contracts for certain equipment.

- (a) Local boards of education may purchase or finance the purchase of automobiles; school buses; mobile classroom units; photocopiers; and computers, computer hardware, computer software, and related support services by lease purchase contracts and installment purchase contracts as provided in this section. Computers, computer hardware, computer software, and related support services purchased under this section shall meet the technical standards specified in the North Carolina Instructional Technology Plan as developed and approved under G.S. 115C-102.6A and G.S. 115C-102.6B.
- (b) A lease purchase contract under this section creates in the local board the right to possess and use the property for a specified period of time in exchange for periodic payments and shall include either an obligation or an option to purchase the property during the term of the contract. The contract may include an option to upgrade the property during the term. A local board may exercise an option to upgrade without rebidding the contract.

- (c) An installment purchase contract under this section creates in the property purchased a security interest to secure payment of the purchase price to the seller or to an individual or entity advancing moneys or supplying financing for the purchase transaction.
- (d) The term of a contract entered into under this section shall not exceed the useful life of the property purchased. An option to upgrade shall be considered in determining the useful life of the property.
- (e) A contract entered into under this section shall be considered a continuing contract for capital outlay and subject to G.S. 115C-441(c1).
- (f) A contract entered into under this section is subject to Article 8 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes, except for G.S. 159-148(a)(4) and (b)(2).
- (g) Subsections (e) and (f) of this section shall not apply to contracts entered into under this section so long as the term of each contract does not exceed three years and the total amount financed during any three-year period is no greater than two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) or is no greater than three times the local board's annual State allocation for classroom materials, equipment, and instructional supplies, whichever is less. The local board shall submit information, including the principal and interest paid and the amount of outstanding obligation, concerning these contracts as part of the annual budget it submits to its board of county commissioners under Article 31 of this Chapter.
- (h) No contract entered into under this section may contain a nonsubstitution clause that restricts the right of a local board to:
 - (1) Continue to provide a service or activity;
 - (2) Replace or provide a substitute for any property financed or purchased by the contract.
- (i) No deficiency judgment may be rendered against any local board of education or any unit of local government, as defined in G.S. 160A-20(h), in any action for breach of a contractual obligation authorized by this section, and the taxing power of a unit of local government is not and may not be pledged directly or indirectly to secure any moneys due under a contract authorized by this section."

Sec. 15 The Information Resource Management Commission shall develop and annually revise guidelines for determining the useful life of computers purchased under G.S. 115C-528. The Division of Purchase and Contract shall develop and periodically revise guidelines for determining the useful life of automobiles, school buses, and photocopiers purchased under G.S. 115C-528. The Local Government Commission shall develop and periodically revise guidelines for determining the useful life of mobile classroom units purchased under G.S. 115C-528. Guidelines for computers and photocopiers shall include provisions for upgrades during the term of the contract. The Information Resource Management Commission, the Division of Purchase and Contract, and the Local Government Commission shall provide their respective guidelines to the State Board of Education by November 1, 1996. The State Board of Education shall provide the guidelines to local boards of education by January 1, 1997.

Sec. 15.1 (a) The State Board of Education shall develop and implement a pilot program allowing selected local school administrative units to purchase supplies, equipment, and materials from noncertified sources. In developing the program, the State Board shall collaborate with the Department of Administration on establishing standards, specifications, and any other measures necessary to implement and evaluate the pilot program. The State Board shall initially select twelve (12) local school administrative units that are diverse in geography and size to participate in the pilot program. If the State Board thereafter determines that the pilot program is

effective, efficient, and in the best interest of the public schools, the State Board shall have the authority to expand the pilot program to additional local school administrative units.

- (b) Local school administrative units participating in the pilot program shall have the authority to purchase the same supplies, equipment, and materials from noncertified sources as are available under State term contracts, subject to the following conditions:
 - (1) The purchase price, including the cost of delivery, is less than the cost under the State term contract;
 - (2) The cost of the purchase shall not exceed the bid value benchmark established under G.S. 143-53.1;
 - (3) The local school administrative unit documents in writing the cost savings; and
 - (4) The local school administrative unit shall provide annually by August 15 an itemized report of the cost savings to the State Board of Education.
- (c) The requirements listed in subsection (b) of this section shall not apply to purchases from noncertified sources that fall below the economic ordering quantity of a State term contract.
- (d) The State Board of Education shall provide to the Department of Administration copies of the itemized annual reports produced by the local school administrative units participating in the pilot program. The State Board shall evaluate the information provided by the participating units and shall report its findings and recommendations to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by October 1, 1997, and annually thereafter.

Sec. 16 G.S. 115C-326 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C- 326 Performance standards and criteria for professional employees; law suits arising out of this section.

- (a) The State Board of Education, in consultation with local boards of education, shall develop uniform performance standards and criteria to be used in evaluating professional public school employees. It shall develop rules and regulations to recommend the use of these standards and criteria in the employee evaluation process. The performance standards and criteria may be modified in the discretion of the Board.

Local boards of education shall adopt rules to provide for the evaluation of all professional employees defined as teachers in G.S. 115C-325(a)(6). All teachers shall be evaluated annually unless a local board adopts rules that allow specified categories of teachers with career status to be evaluated less frequently. Local boards may also adopt rules requiring the annual evaluation of other school employees not specifically covered in this section. Local boards may develop and use alternative evaluation approaches for teachers provided the evaluations are properly validated. Local boards that do not develop alternative evaluations shall utilize the performance standards and criteria adopted by the State Board of Education, but are not limited to those standards and criteria.

- (b) If any claim is made or any legal action is instituted against an employee of a local school administrative unit on account of an act done or an omission made in the course of the employee's duties in evaluating employees pursuant to this section, the local board of education, if the employee is held not liable, shall reimburse the employee for reasonable attorney's fees."

Sec. 17 G.S. 115C-47 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(33a) To Approve and Use Textbooks Not Adopted by State Board of Education. — Local boards of education shall have the authority to select, procure, and use textbooks not adopted by the State Board of Education as provided in G.S. 115C-98(b1)."

Sec. 18 G.S. 115C-85 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C-85 Textbook needs are determined by course of study.

When the State Board of Education has adopted, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, a standard course of study at each instructional level in the elementary school and the secondary school, setting forth what subjects shall be taught at each level, it shall proceed to select and adopt textbooks.

As used in this part, 'textbook' means systematically organized material comprehensive enough to cover the primary objectives outlined in the standard course of study for a grade or course. Formats for textbooks may be print or nonprint, including hardbound books, softbound books, activity-oriented programs, classroom kits, and technology-based programs that require the use of electronic equipment in order to be used in the learning process.

Textbooks adopted in accordance with the provisions of this Part shall be used by the public schools of the State except as provided in G.S. 115C-98(b1)."

Sec. 19 G.S. 115C-98 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C- 98 Local boards of education to provide for local operation of the textbook program, the selection and procurement of other instructional materials, and the use of nonadopted textbooks.

- (a) Local boards of education shall adopt rules not inconsistent with the policies of the State Board of Education concerning the local operation of the textbook program.
- (b) Local boards of education shall adopt written policies concerning the procedures to be followed in their local school administrative units for the selection and procurement of supplementary textbooks, library books, periodicals, audiovisual materials, and other supplementary instructional materials needed for instructional purposes in the public schools of their units.

Local boards of education shall have sole authority to select and procure supplementary instructional materials, whether or not the materials contain commercial advertising, to determine if the materials are related to and within the limits of the prescribed curriculum, and to determine when the materials may be presented to students during the school day. Supplementary materials and contracts for supplementary materials are not subject to approval by the State Board of Education.

Supplementary books and other instructional materials shall neither displace nor be used to the exclusion of basic textbooks.

(b1) Local boards of education may:

- (1) Select, procure, and use textbooks that have not been adopted by the State Board of Education for use throughout the local school administrative unit for selected grade levels and courses; and
- (2) Approve school improvement plans developed under G.S. 115C-105.22 that include provisions for using textbooks that have not been adopted by the State Board of Education for selected grade levels and courses.

All textbook contracts made under this subsection shall include a clause granting to the local board of education the license to produce braille, large print, and audiocassette tape copies of the textbooks for use in the local school administrative unit.

- (c) Funds allocated by the State Board of Education or appropriated in the current expense or capital outlay budgets of the local school administrative units, may be used for the above-stated purposes."

Sec. 20 G.S.115C-112 is repealed.

Sec. 21 G.S.115C-391 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

- "(g) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, the policies and procedures for the discipline of students with disabilities shall be consistent with federal laws and regulations."

-CONFORMING CHANGES

Sec. 22 G.S. 115C-105.3 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C-105.3 Purpose.

The purpose of the Commission is to develop high and clearly defined education standards for the public schools of North Carolina. These standards shall specify the skills and the knowledge that high school graduates should possess in order to be competitive in the modern economy. The purpose of the Commission is also to develop fair and valid assessments to assure that high school graduates in North Carolina meet these standards. No later than the Spring semester of the year 2000 or as soon as the State Board of Education adopts the standards and system of assessments, every graduating high school senior shall be required to achieve these standards as a condition for receiving a diploma.

These high standards and assessments shall focus on the key skills needed by students as they strive to be successful after high school and shall reflect the high expectations for every student demanded by the State's education mission in G.S.115C-81(a) and G.S.115C-105.20. Once these key skills are identified, parents, teachers, and the entire school community should be encouraged to help each student meet the student's fullest potential."

Sec. 23. G.S. 115C-238.23 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C-238.23 Implementation by local school boards.

If a school administrative unit decides to proceed with the project the following procedures shall be followed:

- (a) The local board in a participating local school administrative unit shall select a school building that is under construction as its first school under the project.
- (b) The local board shall issue a request for proposals for leadership teams to bid to operate the selected school. A team shall mean three or more individuals. To reflect the diversity required to implement the purpose of the project defined in G.S.115C-238.22, the abilities and experience of team members may include: administrative and educational policy and planning skills; familiarity with technology for schools; management and classroom experience; and familiarity with the needs of diverse and special populations. One member shall be designated as the principal or leader of the team. At least twenty-five percent (25%) of the team members shall be certificated in accordance with the regulations of the State Board of Education.

Team members awarded the contract shall, if not already, become employees of the local board and become subject to local personnel policies.

(c) The request for proposals shall include the following minimum requirements:

- (1) A statement of principles that the local board wants the bidding teams to address;
- (2) A specified amount of money available for the operation of the building, which amount shall be within the limits of funds available for the size of school being opened for bid;
- (3) A framework for accountability plans by which the success of the project site can be measured, which accountability plans shall include the student performance indicators adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to the School Improvement and Accountability Act of 1989, and shall include factors such as student, parent, and employee satisfaction, parental involvement, community service, and evidence of a focus on developing thinking and reasoning skills;
- (4) The student population of a Genesis school shall be representative of its local school administrative unit, shall be racially balanced, and students shall be assigned on a geographic basis;
- (5) The mission of the school shall not establish religion nor prohibit the free exercise thereof insofar as that is permitted in a public school by the North Carolina and United States Constitutions; and
- (6) Bidding teams shall address how the criteria listed in G.S.115C-81(b) will be met or varied by the Genesis program.

The local board may include other requirements in the request for proposals.

- (d) The local board shall secure private funding for any additional non-State and nonlocal funds required for the project before awarding a contract to a team to operate the selected school.
- (e) The local board shall appoint an advisory committee composed of educators, elected officials, parents of children enrolled in the local school administrative unit, and community leaders from within and without the local school administrative unit to screen proposals for the school building and to make recommendations to the local board of education on the proposals.

The local board shall consider the recommendations of the advisory committee and shall award the contract. All contract negotiations and the award of the contract shall be conducted in open session notwithstanding G.S.143-318.11(a)(9). The contract shall be for a term not to exceed four years. It may be terminated by the local board at any time for any reason it deems sufficient; it may be terminated by the team for any reason it deems sufficient, but only at the end of a school year and only with 60 days' written notice to the local board of education.

- (f) The team that receives the contract shall interview and select all personnel for the building. The team may select personnel from the current employees of the local board. All teachers employed in a Genesis school shall hold or be qualified to hold a certificate in accordance with the regulations of the State Board of Education or the School Improvement and Accountability Act of 1989. The local board shall hire those persons selected by the team so long as those positions are within State, local, and other funds approved for this project by the local board. In no event shall a local board dismiss or demote any employee pursuant to G.S.115C-325(e)(1) as a result of a Genesis project.

Hiring shall take place no later than July 1, prior to the opening of the new building. The team shall begin conducting training and planning sessions as staff is hired.

The local board or the management team may employ noncertificated persons on a temporary basis or for special projects.

- (g) The participating school building team shall initiate a comprehensive accountability program immediately. The results shall be published annually and compared to those of traditional schools.
- (h) After the third and fourth years of the project, the local board shall review student achievement results of the existing project site. After the fourth year of the project the local board may decide whether to continue the project in the first school and whether an additional building within the school system shall be added to the project. If the board decides to expand the project to a second school the procedures outlined in this section shall be followed.

The second school chosen for the project shall be an existing school that is producing below average results in student achievement as compared to other schools in the unit. Criteria which may be considered to evaluate student achievement may include: test scores, the success of graduating students, attendance, graduation and dropout rates, the numbers of children enrolled in free lunch or Chapter 1 programs, the education level of the parents of children enrolled in the school, the teaching experience of the school staff, and whether the building has been successful in meeting the goals of the systemwide plan developed in accordance with the School Improvement and Accountability Act of 1989."

Sec. 24 G.S.115C-238.31(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Local school administrative units are encouraged to implement extended services programs that will expand students' opportunities for educational success through high-quality, integrated access to instructional programming during nonschool hours. Extended services programs may be incorporated into school improvement plans developed in accordance with G.S.115C-105.22. Calendar alternatives include, but are not limited to, after-school hours, before-school hours, evening school, Saturday school, summer school, and year-round school. Instructional programming may include, but is not limited to, tutoring, direct instruction, enrichment activities, study skills, and reinforcement projects."

Sec. 25 G.S.115C-276(q) reads as rewritten:

"(q) To Assign School Principals. — Subject to local board policy, the superintendent shall have the authority to assign principals to school buildings. When making an assignment, the superintendent shall consider (i) whether a principal has demonstrated the leadership ability to increase student achievement at a school where conditions indicated a significant risk of low student performance; and (ii) how to maintain stability at a school where, during the time the principal has been at a school, there has been significant improvement on end-of-course or end-of-grade tests and other accountability measures developed by the State Board of Education."

Sec. 26 G.S.115C-302(e) reads as rewritten:

"(e) It is the policy of the State of North Carolina to enhance the teaching profession by providing teachers with career opportunities that do not remove them from the classroom; to encourage the development and implementation of a professional salary schedule that complements the system of differentiation; to have salaries of professional educators in elementary and secondary schools based upon performance, degree attained, differentiation and the needs of the local school administrative unit; and to begin, in the school year beginning in 1986, a differential salary system based upon performance, differentiation, local availability of classroom teachers, geographical location of the employing local school administrative unit and such other factors as the local board of education shall deem necessary.

Performance shall be measured by standardized evaluations which are routinely administered pursuant to G.S. 115C-326. Differentiation shall be based upon superior performance over a period of time plus other responsibilities. Needs of the local school administrative unit over and above the standard course of study shall be defined by the local board of education exclusively funded from revenues provided at the discretion of the board of county commissioners or from other local funds under the control of the local board of education.

Each salary may include a local variable component, determined locally and based upon the needs and condition of the local school administrative unit. This local variable component shall be paid from local revenue."

Sec. 27. Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-105.21A(1), the State Board of Education shall authorize pilot projects in the Mecklenburg County School Administrative Unit and in the Burke County School Administrative Unit so that the boards of education in those units may use State funds from the allotment for teacher assistants for certificated teachers in order to reduce class size or the student-teacher ratio in kindergarten through third grade, in accordance with school improvement plans developed under G.S. 115C-105.22. No waivers from the State Board of Education are required for this use of funds.

-STREAMLINE APA FOR ABC PLAN

Sec. 28. (a) G.S. 150B-21.2(a)(1) shall not apply to proposed rules adopted by the State Board of Education if the proposed rules are directly related to the implementation of this act.

(b) Notwithstanding G.S. 150B-21.3(b), a permanent rule that is adopted by the State Board of Education, is approved by the Rules Review Commission, and is directly related to the implementation of this act, shall become effective five business days after the Commission delivers the rule to the Codifier of Rules, unless the rule specifies a later effective date. If the State Board of Education specifies a later effective date, the rule becomes effective upon that date. A permanent rule that is adopted by the State Board of Education that is directly related to the implementation of this act, but is not approved by the Rules Review Commission, shall not become effective.

(c) G.S. 150B-21.4(b1) shall not apply to permanent rules the State Board of Education proposes to adopt if those rules are directly related to the implementation of this act.

(d) The State Board of Education shall determine whether a proposed rule is directly related to this act based upon a finding that there is a rational relationship between the proposed rule and specific provisions of this act. A proposed rule may create, amend, or repeal a rule. The State Board shall indicate in the notice of proposed text that the rule is directly related to the implementation of this act and that the Board is proceeding under the authority granted by this act.

(e) The State Board of Education shall provide written notice to all boards of county commissioners and all local boards of education of proposed rules that are directly related to the implementation of this act and that would affect the expenditures or revenues of a unit of local government under G.S. 150B-21.4(b). The notice shall state that a copy of the fiscal note may be obtained from the State Board.

(f) This section shall not apply to Sections 11-15.1 of this act.

-REPORTING

Sec. 29 (a) The State Board of Education shall submit a progress report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 15, 1996, regarding the implementation of this act including accountability system performance standards, implementation plans for grades 9 through 12, the rules and guidelines adopted under this act, reliability and validity of assessments used for the purpose of this act, and an evaluation of the pilot programs developed under Section 17.10 of Chapter 507 of the 1995 Session Laws.

(b) Beginning October 15, 1997, and annually thereafter, the State Board of Education shall submit reports to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee regarding the continued implementation of this act. Each report shall include information regarding the composition and activity of assistance teams, those schools that received incentive awards, those schools that were identified as low-performing, school improvement plans found to significantly improve student performance, personnel actions taken in low-performing schools, and recommendations for additional legislation to improve student performance and increase local flexibility.

(c) The State Board of Education shall develop a plan that encourages teachers to seek employment or remain employed in schools that have been identified as low-performing under G.S. 115C-105.30. The plan shall include recommendations regarding additional compensation for (i) newly recruited teachers, and (ii) currently employed teachers whose students have shown significant improvement in academic performance. The State Board shall submit its plan to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 15, 1996.

Sec. 30 G.S. 143-57.1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 143-57.1 Furniture requirements contracts.

(a) To ensure agencies access to sufficient sources of furniture supply and service, to provide agencies the necessary flexibility to obtain furniture that is compatible with interior architectural design and needs, to provide small and disadvantaged businesses additional opportunities to participate on State requirements contracts, and to restore the traditional use of multiple award contracts for purchasing furniture requirements, each State furniture requirements contract shall be awarded on a multiple award basis, subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Competitive, sealed bids must be solicited for the contract in accordance with Article 3 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes unless otherwise provided for by the State Purchasing Officer pursuant to that Article.
- (2) Subject to the provisions of this section, bids shall be evaluated and the contract awarded in accordance with Article 3 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes.
- (3) For each category of goods under each State requirements furniture contract, awards shall be made to at least three qualified vendors unless the State Purchasing Officer determines that three qualified vendors are not available or that it is in the best interest of the State to make fewer awards. The State Purchasing Officer, subject to the approval of the Board of Award, shall state his reasons in writing for making fewer awards and the written documentation shall be maintained as part of the bid file and subject to public inspection.
- (4) An agency may purchase from any vendor certified on the contract but shall make the most economical purchase that it determines meets its needs, based upon price, compatibility, service, delivery, freight charges, and other factors that it considers relevant.

- (b) For purposes of this section, 'furniture requirements contract' means State requirements contracts for casegoods, classroom furniture, bookcases, ergonomic chairs, office swivel and side chairs, computer furniture, mobile and folding furniture, upholstered seating, commercial dining tables, and related items."

Sec. 31 With respect to a furniture requirements contract that is not currently under G.S. 143-57.1, an agency may purchase from any vendor certified on the contract but shall make the most economical purchase that it determines meets its needs, based upon price, compatibility, service, delivery, and other factors that it considers relevant.

-EFFECTIVE DATES

Sec. 32 (a) Section 15.1 of this act becomes effective July 1, 1996, and applies to State term contracts for which bids or offers are solicited on or after that date.

(b) The remainder of the act is effective upon ratification.

(c) Part 3 of Article 8B of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, as rewritten in Section 3 of this act, applies to any school that has any grades of kindergarten through eighth grade beginning with the 1996-97 school year, and to the remaining schools beginning with the 1997-98 school year. The State Board shall establish appropriate deadlines for the development of school improvement plans after July 1, 1996.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 21st day of June, 1996.

Dennis A. Wicker
President of the Senate

Harold J. Brubaker
Speaker of the House of Representatives

ABCs of Public Education in North Carolina: A Journey Toward Excellence

School Improvement Division Assistance Team Members

Name	Position	School(s) Served	Home LEA
Adger, Sonya	Reviewer	Townsend Middle	New Hanover County
Allen, Shirley	Reviewer	Lingerfeldt Elementary	Charlotte/Mecklenburg
Barnett, Susan	Reviewer	Union Hill Elementary	Watauga County
Blake, Gary	Reviewer	Arlington Elementary	Kings Mountain District
Blakeley-Shuler, Patricia	Reviewer	Lingerfeldt Elementary	Rowan/Salisbury
Branch, Sheneel	Leader	Weldon Middle Enfield Middle	Wilson County
Brinkley, Anne	Leader	Pauline Jones Elementary	Robeson County
Burroughs, JoAn	Reviewer	Phillips Math & Science	Vance County
Carter, Dianne	Reviewer	William R. Davie Middle	Franklin County
Chappell, Patricia	Leader	Townsend Middle	New Hanover
Coffey-Bell, Judy	Reviewer	Union Hill Elementary	Forsyth County
Cope, Dennis	Leader	Arlington Elementary	Charlotte/Mecklenburg

Name	Position	School(s) Served	Home LEA
Costello, Janie	Reviewer	Poe Montessori Elementary	Guilford County
Daves, Gail	Leader	Allenbrook Elementary Shamrock Gardens Elementary	Cleveland County
Dover, Jo	Reviewer	Pinkston Street Elementary	Cumberland County
Dula, Katy	Reviewer	Allenbrook Elementary Shamrock Gardens Elementary	Caldwell County
Eatman, Melissa	Reviewer	Pinkston Street Elementary	Chatham County
Fallon, Denise	Reviewer	Weldon Middle	Camden County
Frank, Carol	Reviewer	Allenbrook Elementary Shamrock Gardens Elementary	Union County
Fulcher, Linda	Reviewer	Pauline Jones Elementary	Moore County
Garrett, Alice	Leader	William R. Davie Middle	Franklin County
Greene, Richard	Leader	Pinkston Street Elementary	Retired
Hall, Christine	Reviewer	Townsend Middle	Brunswick County
Halyard, Brenda	Reviewer	Princeville Montessori Elementary	Northampton County
Harris, Melinda	Reviewer	Enfield Middle	Weldon City
Hauser, LaDonna	Reviewer	Townsend Middle	New Hanover
Head, Tanya	Reviewer	Pauline Jones Elementary	Robeson County
Heath, Pam	Reviewer	Princeville Montessori Elementary	Lenoir County
Hooker, Sandra	Reviewer	Weldon Middle	Elizabeth City/ Pasquotank
Huneycutt, Sharon	Reviewer	Rex-Rennert Elementary	Moore County
Johnson, Shirley	Reviewer	Princeville Montessori Elementary	Halifax County
Jones, Elaine	Leader	Princeville Montessori Elementary	Wilson County
Jones, Theresa	Reviewer	Princeville Montessori Elementary	Wake County

Name	Position	School(s) Served	Home LEA
Lawrence, Cherryl	Reviewer	Phillips Science, Math, Tech. Magnet	Wilson County
Leiphart, Wesley	Reviewer	Union Hill Elementary	Forsyth County
Lowry, Pam	Reviewer	Poe Montessori Elementary	Guilford County
Mauldin, Billy	Reviewer	Allenbrook Elementary Shamrock Gardens Elementary	Retired
Mazzaferro, Kenneth	Leader	Lingerfeldt Elementary	Charlotte/Mecklenburg
McCarthy, Marilyn	Reviewer	Pinkston Street Elementary	Cumberland County
McLaughlin, Linda	Reviewer	Rex-Rennert Elementary	Hoke County
Mizelle, Richard	Reviewer	Phillips Science, Math, Tech. Magnet	NCCU
Morrison, Carolyn	Leader	Phillips Science, Math, Tech. Magnet	Wake County
Mozingo, Terri	Leader	Poe Montessori Elementary	Contract
Outlaw, Rosemary	Reviewer	Townsend Middle	Davidson County
Payne, Brenda	Reviewer	Phillips Science, Math, Tech. Magnet	Durham Public
Pearce, Karen	Reviewer	Rex-Rennert Elementary	Alamance County
Perry, Michael	Reviewer	Weldon Middle	Hertford County
Pittman, Susan	Reviewer	William R. Davie Middle	Wake County
Pope, Phyllis	Reviewer	Pauline Jones Elementary	Robeson County
Pratt, Lisa	Reviewer	Arlington Elementary	Charlotte/Mecklenburg
Reed, Gerry	Reviewer	Enfield Middle	Carteret County
Rhyne, Patricia	Reviewer	Allenbrook Elementary Shamrock Gardens Elementary	Lincoln County
Ridge, Brock	Reviewer	Enfield Middle	Retired
Sadoff, Arnold	Reviewer	Arlington Elementary	Charlotte/Mecklenburg
Skipper, Larry	Reviewer	Lingerfeldt Elementary	Charlotte/Mecklenburg
Spangler, Vicki	Reviewer	Arlington Elementary	Shelby City

Name	Position	School(s) Served	Home LEA
Spencer, Sarah	Reviewer	Rex-Rennert Elementary	Harnett County
Van Roekel, Johnnie	Leader	Union Hill Elementary	Lexington City
Ward, Sharon	Leader	Rex-Rennert Elementary	Charlotte/Mecklenburg
Webb-Harris, Geraldine	Reviewer	Pinkston Street Elementary	Wake County
Whisnant, Judy	Reviewer	Lingerfeldt Elementary	Catawba County



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